

# Magnus Synnestvedt

## Musical Tastes, Cultural Diplomacy, and the Parisian Avant-Garde, 1902–1908

*Jann Pasler*

French interest in Nordic art, theatre and music grew substantially in the 1890s. Since 1888, the French and Russians had been in discussions about an alliance providing that the two countries defend one another if peace was threatened. When this was solidified in 1893, nationalist and protectionist forces began to relax and interest turned northward.<sup>1</sup> In this spirit, a number of musical organisations began to sponsor performances of Russian music. On 15 and 22 October 1893, the Concerts Colonne gave two concerts of Russian music, mostly premieres of works by composers of the 'Mighty Handful', as did the Concerts d'Harcourt that autumn. The Opéra put on a gala in honour of the Russian navy on 25 November, and the following January the Opéra-comique produced César Cui's opera, *Flibustier*. When the conductor Edouard Colonne left in March 1894 to give concerts of French music in Russia, the programme notes for his orchestral series in Paris explained his replacement by foreign conductors, 'By the universality of its language, music alone can make possible this act of international brotherhood'. On 4 August 1894, in his annual speech to the Conservatory students while distributing their prizes, Georges Leygues, the Minister of Public Instruction, made a similar point:

This universal country is open to all. Foreigners receive the most generous hospitality. That's an advantage for them as well as for us. There's value in knowing everything, in always seeing more clearly, in conversing, whatever their country or their school.[...] This year, it's the literature, theater, and music of certain races from the North that have had the honor of being in fashion. No one will regret it.[...] We have been able to glimpse new horizons and taste the

---

1 As Helena Tyräinen points out, in the case of Finland, this alliance coincided with 'a shift from a German to French cultural orientation' among both Swedish-speaking and Finnish-speaking elites in the 1880s and 1890s. Moreover, because of the Franco-Russian alliance, until 1899 when conflict began over the possible autonomy of Finland, 'Finns were able to enjoy a new kind of value in the eyes of the French if they appeared in Russian ranks'. See Tyräinen, 1998 and 2003a.

I am grateful to two anonymous readers for their suggestions and to Anders Edling, Helena Tyräinen, Rune Andersen, Harald Herresthal, and Malou Haine for providing me with various material that helped to enlarge the context of this article.

flavour of a certain number of powerful or subtle works with a somewhat distressing psychology, but an indisputable originality. (Leygues, 1894)

This new openness to influences from the north drew renewed attention to French identity as rooted in the north as well as the Mediterranean and to the role of French music, and of France itself, as one of 'alliance and reconciliation'. Indeed, French artists had long been proud of their capacity for assimilation, their ability not only to achieve a 'juste milieu' or the 'harmonious fusion' of Italian and German influences, but also to 'assimilate the progress of all countries' (Pasler, 2009, pp. 235, 256, 295; Lacombe, 1997, pp. 282-284).

Such attitudes had an important effect on Scandinavian-French relations. The painter Edvard Munch, who studied in Paris beginning in 1889 and lived there on and off throughout the next decade, won the respect of Symbolists like Mallarmé. In an 1897 exhibition of his works with the Independents, he was accorded a place of honour in the hall. Henrik Ibsen, in particular, was understood as a predecessor to French symbolists and as an artist who espoused his own agenda of rebellion, individualism, elitism, and aestheticism. Introduced in Paris at the Théâtre Libre in 1890-91, his works were regularly performed at the Théâtre de l'Œuvre beginning in 1893.<sup>2</sup> So, too, were those of Bjørnsterne Bjørnson and August Strindberg. Sometimes the Norwegian community was involved with these projects. The painter Fritz Thaulow designed the set for Bjørnson's *Beyond Human Power* in 1894 and Norwegian students, dressed in national costumes, appeared as peasants and fishermen. Munch produced lithographs for two of l'Œuvre's Ibsen programmes in 1896 and 1897. In 1895 and 1896, Strindberg published essays in the respected literary journal *La Revue blanche* (Strindberg, 1895a, b, 1896).

The public was also increasingly drawn to Nordic music in the 1890s. Grieg was by far the most popular Nordic composer since his visits there in the 1880s (Tyräinen, 2003b; Herresthal and Reznicek, 1994, pp. 131-265; Herresthal and Pistone, 1996). The Concerts Lamoureux gave premieres of his works in 1884-85, 1890-91 and 1891-92 and he was featured on a concert of the Société nationale on 4 January 1890. Colonne performed his music almost every year from 1888 to 1903.<sup>3</sup> Grieg conducted his own works at the Concerts Colonne on 22 December 1889, and while Colonne was in Russia in 1894, Grieg was one of three conductors invited to replace him. On this occasion, 22 April, the composer presented a concert of entirely his own works, including five premieres. The programme notes hailed him as the 'Chopin of the North' and the concert attracted a sell-out crowd, earning for the orchestra the second highest receipts that season. Reflecting this public

---

2 On the Théâtre de l'Œuvre's productions of Ibsen from 1893-1897, see Deak, 1993, pp. 187-217.

3 That is, in 1888, 1890, 1891, 1892, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1898, 1901, and 1903.

acclaim, Grieg won election as a foreign member to the Académie des Beaux-Arts. Later Mme Emma Holmstrand, from Sweden, presented concerts in Paris at the Bodinière theater in 1897 (Grieg, Sjögren, Lago, and others) and in Monte-Carlo in 1898 (Sjögren, Sinding, and Hansen). And in July and August 1900, Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian concerts were well-received at the Universal Exhibition, after which Sibelius received the Legion of Honour.<sup>4</sup>

French composers responded, too. Edouard Lalo's *Fantaisie norvégienne* (1878) and *Rapsodie norvégienne* (1879),<sup>5</sup> were later followed by César Franck's opera, *Hulda*, based on a play by Bjørnson, composed between 1882 and 1885 and finally published and performed in 1894.<sup>6</sup> Others too began to examine Scandinavian sources as possible models for their own work. Debussy's *Quartet* (1894) bore strong resemblances to Grieg's *Quartet*, the first foreign work presented at the Société Nationale after its new statutes in 1886 (Strasser, 2007). Vincent d'Indy's opera *Fervaal* (1881–95) has its roots in his libretto for *Axël* (based on Esaias Tegnér's work but with the story transported from Sweden to France). His next major work, the opera *L'Etranger* (1898–1901), was modeled on Ibsen's play, *Brand*. On 26 June 1902, he wrote to his friend, the critic Michel Calvocoressi, who prepared an analysis of the work: 'The comparison with Brand is very legitimate, all the more so because its layout – not so much the conception, but the arrangement of the drama – was done after a careful reading of Ibsen'.<sup>7</sup> Omer Letorey, a young composer who received the Prix de Rome in 1895, was also drawn to *Brand*. The Concerts Lamoureux premiered Letorey's symphonic poem based on it in their 1899–1900 season.

## Magnus Synnestvedt

This was the context in which the Norwegian Magnus Synnestvedt (1879–1947) and his family settled in Paris at the turn of the century. His father served there as the Norwegian vice-consul; his mother was French and a singer. They lived on the posh west-side, in Neuilly. Magnus studied law, completing his doctorate at the Sorbonne and presenting his work on 20 June 1904 under the title *Le Droit International Privé de la Scandinave*.<sup>8</sup>

---

4 See Tyräinen, 1998. Note also that a critic in *Monde musical* (15 July 1900) considered the Finnish orchestra of 75 musicians to be 'one of the most interesting artistic events of the exhibition'.

5 The latter was performed, for example, at the Concerts Lamoureux on 7 and 28 February 1904 and at the Concerts Colonne on 18 March 1906.

6 Lalo's and Franck's works based on Scandinavian models may have been influenced by the Norwegian composer Johan Svendsen who first came to Paris in 1868. He lived there from fall 1878 to 1880 during which time Pacheloup performed one of his Norwegian rhapsodies. Franck wrote *Hulda* somewhat later, between 1882 to 1885. See Bergsagel, 1980.

7 See Vallas, 1950, pp. 310–312 for a comparison of d'Indy's *L'Etranger* with Ibsen's *Brand*. See also Calvocoressi's analysis, 1903.

8 The thesis, 328 pages, was published that year by Librairie Nilsson. The Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris has a copy, 8-F-15619. It was reprinted by Kessinger Publishing in 2010.

By 1904 he was working as the chancellor of the Swedish and Norwegian legations in Paris.



Illustration 1. Magnus Synnestvedt. Collection Nicole Bat.

Given his bilingual and familial background, Magnus was in an ideal position to serve as an ambassador between French and Scandinavian culture. His diplomacy took many forms, from public lectures to various kinds of publications. These included talks in 1903 in Roubaix and Lille on the economic future of the Scandinavian peninsula – attended by the Nordic consul Nordling and Synnestvedt's father – and another in Lille in November 1904 on Scandinavian nature and its people.<sup>9</sup> Magnus also did French translations,

---

<sup>9</sup> See the announcements in the *Bulletin de la Société de la Géographie de Lille* on 24 October 1903, (January 1904), p. 13, and on 4 February, (June 1905), p. 333.

including one of Ibsen's *Brand*. Most likely through his diplomatic connections, in May 1902 he received permission from the Swedish King Oscar to translate some of his poetry into French and publish it. While it is not clear whose idea this was, Auguste Hagborg would illustrate it and very famous French writers would participate – Jules Clarétie with a preface and recent Nobel laureate Sully Prudhomme with an introduction, a sonnet.<sup>10</sup> When the king came to Paris that month, he gave a dinner during which these poems were read. In September 1906, one of these was reproduced in an article on the recent 'divorce' between Norway and Sweden. As this French critic understood it, Oscar's poem presented the king's ideal not as 'political domination' or war, but as 'the well-being of his subjects' and fraternity with their neighbors (Parmentier, 1906). Indeed, Norwegian independence took place calmly but decisively, without bloodshed. The popularity of Oscar's poems in Parisian salons got Magnus's name around and served as an introduction to French performers and their public.

After Norway declared its independence, Magnus became a major advocate for Norwegian culture in Paris. In June 1906, to coincide with the first anniversary of the dissolution of King Oscar's parliament and the coronation of the new Norwegian king Haakon VII, the French newspaper *Le Figaro* sent him to the gothic cathedral at Trondhjem, the ancient Norwegian capital, to report on the coronation. Its editors also commissioned from him a major essay on Norwegian arts and culture for a special issue of its large-format monthly magazine, *Figaro illustré*. This 19-page, illustrated article contains well-written, well-researched sections on literature, drama, the novel, decorative and applied arts, painting, sculpture, and music. After a short history of the Norwegian people, explaining their differences with the Danish and the Swedes and stressing the Vikings' courageous, audacious conquests across the globe as well as their 'remarkable capacity for assimilation', Synnestvedt focuses on Norwegians' 'passionate love for independence' and 'pursuit of personality'. Interestingly, he notes that, not troubled as much as Europe by 'political rivalries' and 'class struggles', it is 'artistic activity that reveals these traits in Norwegians. The recent political evolution in Norway, he suggests, had 'long been prepared by its Norwegian artists', he writes proudly, 'in no country and in no other time, perhaps, has art had such a profound and active influence on social and political life'. Ibsen, in particular, stands out for his 'individual will' and his 'profound hatred' for 'received ideas', while avoiding all egoism and any pursuit of art for art's sake. Synnestvedt also recognizes many women artists, especially Mme Agathe Backer-Groendahl, who 'created the Norwegian literature for piano', one of whose works is here reproduced.

---

10 See 'Echos et nouvelles', *La Revue Diplomatique*, 4 May 1902, p. 8.

Charles Munch, interestingly, receives criticism from Synnestvedt for allowing his time in Germany to encourage 'the search for originality in the bizarre' (Synnestvedt, 1906b).<sup>11</sup>

A recurring theme, linked to the political subtext, is the importance Synnestvedt ascribes to rural popular traditions as the root of national identity. After five centuries, he writes, as elite literary traditions in Norway looked to those of Denmark and Germany, 'a national and individual art' could only emerge by 'becoming conscious of the value and beauty of its popular traditions'. In the mountains and forests, isolated from both political regimes and the influence of European culture, 'enemy of all individualism', popular poetry, design, song, and dance thrived. From these, Norwegian writers, artists, and musicians were drawing inspiration, 'filtered by their personality'. These included not just Ibsen and Grieg, but also the decorative artist Gerhard Munthe, who used popular art to help 'heal the sense of color weakened by international art' (Synnestvedt, 1906b). The folk songs collected and published by Lindeman in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century helped musicians get in touch with this tradition, and more recently a volume by Catharinius Elling, who sought out those regions where melodies were constructed using ancient scales such as the Dorian and Lydian. Interspersed throughout the article are reproductions of two of Ibsen's autograph manuscripts, paintings, sculpture, architecture, and nine autograph musical scores, signed by the composers. As the last one is dated, 4 April 1906, apparently these were special commissions for the essay. The inclusion of transcribed folk songs as well as works by Grieg and lesser-known Norwegian composers, such as Halvorsen, several with Norwegian texts translated into French by Synnestvedt, gave pride of place to music in this sympathetic and inspiring, albeit uncritical, portrait of Norwegian history and culture. Possibly living in Paris, far from the realities of Norwegian life, encouraged the idealism that underlies this essay.

Synnestvedt also wrote reviews of Norwegian art, beginning in 1902 with the prestigious *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*.<sup>12</sup> In November 1906 he contributed a front-page article to *Le Figaro's* weekly literary supplement on the Norwegian impressionist painter Frits Thaulow and, from November 1906 through fall 1907, a regular column in *L'Art et les artistes* on Norwegian art and art exhibitions in Christiania, for which he probably had to travel there. Synnestvedt points out that an intense passion for things artistic was shared by all the Norwegian people, not just their elites, and argues that independence is the 'mother of originality' (Synnestvedt 1906c, 1907c).

---

11 The University of Oslo library has several letters from artists whom Synnestvedt perhaps contacted for help with this essay.

12 This began with his review article of a book by Olof Granberg on Norwegian landscape painting in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1902, pp. 262-264.

Perhaps most of all, Synnestvedt loved music. According to his daughter, he learned harmony while a soldier in Russia (when he also learned Russian), but does not seem to have been musically trained otherwise.<sup>13</sup> A collection of concert programmes from 1902 to 1908, kept by the family, not only show that Synnestvedt was an active and avid concert-goer, they also provide an unusual opportunity to study the concert-going practices and tastes of a musical amateur at the time. Given that many concerts were available at any one time, especially on Sunday afternoons, Synnestvedt's programmes document how such an individual navigated the complex array of choices available to audiences, and suggest his musical preferences when it came to Nordic music, German music, and the French avant-garde. Even on occasions when he did not keep the programme, he made a hand-written copy noting the pieces and performers, as if keeping such a record was an important part of keeping alive his memory of the performances, a memory perhaps to which he returned on subsequent occasions.

Synnestvedt's tastes were diverse. He attended the opera only occasionally (in 1902 Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine* and *Les Huguenots* and in 1904 d'Indy's *L'Etranger*) and appears to have preferred orchestral and chamber-music concerts. His visits to the prestigious but conservative Société des Concerts du Conservatoire were few, undoubtedly because most seats were sold to subscribers and so subscriptions, treasured like family heirlooms, rarely became available. The largest number of concerts he attended were those of the Concerts Lamoureux and, less often, the Concerts Colonne. At times, especially in spring 1907, he attended concerts of both Lamoureux's bi-weekly concert series. However, since the collection of Lamoureux concert programmes is incomplete, it is possible that he did not subscribe formally. He also patronised concerts of chamber music by the Société Nationale, the Société de Musique Moderne, the Concerts Le Rey, the Quatuor Parent, the Société des Nouveaux Concerts, the Association des Concerts Alfred Cortot, and the Société J.-S. Bach. Programmes of concerts by individual artists such as Edouard Risler, Ludovic Breitner, Wanda Landowska, M. Engel and Jane Bathori are also in his collection. All in all, it appears he went to concerts at least twice a month in season (October–April) and usually once a week at the Concerts Lamoureux, plus one or two additional concerts.

A small number of essays and concert reviews published in 1906 and 1907 document his active participation in the musical world of both Paris and Oslo. In fall 1906, he convinced the Christiania Theater to devote half of a concert to Debussy's music and in December wrote a significant article introducing Norwegian audiences to Debussy's music,

---

13 Interview with the Synnestvedts' daughter Nicole Bat in the fall of 1983, Paris. I am grateful to Madame Bat for having so graciously shared her memories of her parents and their friends and for allowing me to consult and xerox some of her family documents for further study. The Synnestvedts also had another daughter, Christiane.

later reported on in the Parisian press.<sup>14</sup> This was an important moment, for Debussy's name had appeared only once before in the Norwegian press (earlier that September) and his music was also heard for the first time that year in Sweden and a month later in Finland.<sup>15</sup> In recognition of his writing talent and interest in French music, in 1906 Synnestvedt began contributing to the Parisian music magazine, *Mercure musical*, charged with reporting on music in Norway and Denmark. (Interestingly, Sweden was represented by the French music critic, André Pirro, as if, after independence, Synnestvedt would not have objectivity or interest in Sweden's music.) In spring 1907 this included reviews of the Concerts Lamoureux (Synnestvedt 1907b, d).<sup>16</sup> Synnestvedt's essays, which give particular attention to premieres of new French works as well as Russian music, are peppered with strong opinions, suggesting confidence in his musical tastes and a deep engagement with music, whether harshly attacking weak programs or fiercely advocating new music.

## Nordic Music in the Concert Life of Paris

The concert programmes Synnestvedt collected, although only a selection of those presented in Paris at the time, document the presence of Nordic music and musicians in Paris and Synnestvedt's interest in them. Three of the events he attended were presented by an important concert organisation, 'Monde musical'. That it was responsible for recitals by eminent French soloists, such as the pianist Edouard Risler, suggests that these Nordic-music concerts were well-regarded and could expect good ticket sales, enough to merit the efforts of a high-profile management-company.<sup>17</sup> To the extent that Synnestvedt's collection is representative of Parisian concert life, the predominance of such concerts in May and June indicates the organisers' sensitivity to the Parisian concert

---

14 In Synnestvedt, 1907a, Parisians are told that Debussy's *Faune* and *Nocturnes* were received enthusiastically by the Norwegian public, who asked for an encore of 'Fêtes,' but that this gave rise to 'violent' exchanges in the local press. See Synnestvedt, 1906d, his rebuttal of others' critique of Debussy's music in 1906f, and Andersen, 2000.

15 The first public performances of Debussy's music took place in Denmark on 30 July 1904 (*Faune*) and 10 January 1906 (Quartet), in Sweden on 17 January 1906 (Quartet) and 24 November 1906 (*Faune*), in Norway on 9 December 1906 (*Faune*, 'Nuages', 'Fêtes'), and in Finland on 6 February 1907 (Quartet) and 16 March 1908 (*Faune*). Before this Debussy's Quartet was also heard in private performances in Sweden (1899) and Denmark (1903). It was thus the Quartet and *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* that were the first works by Debussy performed in these countries. Synnestvedt, 1906b, points to Grieg as the 'the precursor of audacious harmonies' in Debussy's youthful works. See Tyräinen, 2000, Edling, 2000, Andersen, 2000, and Rollum-Larsen, 2000, all in *Cahiers Debussy*, and the various critiques cited in Herresthal and Reznicek, 1994, pp. 256-261.

16 I'm grateful to Anders Edling for bringing these reviews to my attention.

17 Anders Edling notes a connection between the Swedish composer Emil Sjögren and André Mangeot, possibly the son of Auguste Mangeot, the director of both the journal and the concert organization called 'Monde musical'. André Mangeot traveled to Sweden at least twice and Sjögren dedicated his fourth violin sonata to him.



season which ended each year in mid-to-late April; they may have hoped to attract more people to Nordic music when there was less competition.

**Salle de la Société de Géographie**  
184, Boulevard Saint-Germain

---

Lundi 5 Mai 1902, à 8 heures 3/4 précises du soir

**CONCERT**

donné par M.

**Sven KJELLSTRÖM**

AVEC LE CONCOURS DE

M<sup>lle</sup> Lola de PADILLA

M. Emil SJÖGREN

MM. HEDELIN et STENGER

---

**PRIX DES PLACES**

Fauteuil Réservé : 10 fr — Fauteuil : 5 fr.  
Parquet : 3 fr.

\*\*\*\*\*

On trouve des billets chez MM. A. DURAND et FILS, 4, Place de la Madeleine; à la SALLE DE GÉOGRAPHIE; et chez M. KJELLSTRÖM, 4, rue Dupont-des-Loges.

**PROGRAMME**

---

1. **Trio Piano, Violon et Violoncelle**..... G. HÄGG  
*Allegro moderato ed appassionato — Andante. — Scherzo, allegro vivace. — Allegro con fuoco.*  
MM. HEDELIN, KJELLSTRÖM et STENGER.
2. **Le Trille du diable**..... TARTINI  
M. KJELLSTRÖM.
3. a. **Dors chère prunelle**.....  
b. **Hiver et Printemps**..... Traductions } E. SJÖGREN  
c. **Dans le Jardin du Sérail** } de A. PIRRO  
Mlle LOLA DE PADILLA  
accompagnée par l'AUTEUR.
4. **Prélude et Fughetta**..... N. LAGO  
MM. HEDELIN, KJELLSTRÖM et STENGER.
5. **Sonate pour violon seul (Fragments)**... J. S. BACH  
M. KJELLSTRÖM.
6. a. **Dans la dernière heure**.....  
Traduction de A. PIRRO } E. SJÖGREN  
b. **Der driver en Dug**.....  
Poésie de E. VAN DER RECKE  
Mlle LOLA DE PADILLA,  
accompagnée par l'AUTEUR
7. **Première Sonate (sol mineur)**..... E. SJÖGREN  
*Allegro vivace. — Andantino. — Presto*  
L'AUTEUR et M. KJELLSTRÖM.

---

Administration des Concerts du « MONDE MUSICAL »  
3, Rue du 29 Juillet

Illustration 2. Concert Program with Sven Kjellström and others, 5 May 1902. Collection Nicole Bat.

On Monday evening, 5 May 1902, for example, the Swedish violinist Sven Kjellström,<sup>18</sup> assisted by Mlle Lola de Padilla, Emil Sjögren, Harald Hedelin, and M. Stenger, presented a chamber-music concert at the Salle de la Société de Géographie at 184 blvd Saint-Germain (Illustration 2). This event featured a trio for piano, violin, and cello by Gustav Hägg as well as five songs and the First Violin Sonata by Emil Sjögren with the composer at the piano, interspersed with short works by Tartini, N. Lago and J. S. Bach. Gustaf Hägg, a Swedish organist born in 1867, was in personal contact with Widor and Guilman; Sjögren, born in Stockholm in 1853, regularly visited Paris, beginning in the 1880s and gave annual concerts there from 1901 to 1914. His music reflects an interest in Schumann but also in French composers such as Saint-Saëns and Fauré. N. Lago was the pseudonym of

18 Kjellström worked in Paris from 1897 to 1908, as one of the first violinists at the Concerts Colonne, 1900-1904.

Laura Netzel, a Swedish woman born in 1839 and a prolific composer who studied with Widor in Paris in the 1880s and who was known for organising concerts for homeless women and workers in the 1890s and 1900s; her music shows the influence of Wagner.<sup>19</sup>

On 5 June 1902, Théodor Björkstén, one of the most successful Swedish singers in Paris, gave a recital at the Salle Pleyel. The high ticket prices – at 20, 10 and 5 francs they were double those of the chamber concert the previous month – suggest that he had an important career and could demand high fees. After some German works from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and then songs by Weber, Mendelssohn, Schubert and Bungert, he sang a set by French masters from the same period, including Méhul, followed by songs by contemporary French composers, Delibes, Widor, Bemberg and Diémer, the latter accompanying the singer in his work. The concert ended with two folksongs from Sweden and three from other countries.

On 3 May 1903 Synnestvedt attended an event of the Concerts Le Rey, a lesser known orchestra, which featured, among other soloists and works, the pianist Ludovic Breitner and a premiere of N. Lago's *Fantaisie* for orchestra, as well as a declaimed poem by M. Oscar Fredrik, the literary pseudonym of King Oscar of Sweden and Norway. The performance was dedicated to him.

The next day Synnestvedt went to another concert featuring Sven Kjellström, this time assisted by the Norwegian pianist Mlle Nanne Storm and the Swedish singer Mlle Valborg Svårdström. It began with the Sonata in c minor for piano and violin by Grieg, ended with a nocturne and the *Marche des Nains* by the same, and included airs from Gluck and Bach, Chopin's *Fantasy*, Schumann's *Etudes symphoniques* and short works by Leclair and Gluck-Brahms. It also featured works by three Scandinavian composers: *Le Roi Heimer et Aslög*, a ballad by August Söderman, and *Aveu des derniers moments*, a Swedish song by Isidor Dannström, both Swedish, as well as a ballade by the Norwegian Agathe Backer-Grøndahl. August Söderman (1832–1876), one of the most important Swedish composers of his day, was known for his stage works and incorporation of folk-music elements. Isidor Dannström (1812–1897), also a singer, studied in Paris beginning in 1844. All his compositions are for voice, including the popular 'polska' with folkdance characteristics sung at this concert. Agathe Backer-Grøndahl, née Backer (1847–1907), also a pianist who toured extensively, shared with the other two an interest in folk-music: there are Norwegian folksongs as well as almost 200 original songs in her worklist. At this concert, the audience heard one of her best-known piano pieces, *Ballade*, written in 1895 but the

---

19 For a list of other performances by Emil Sjögren in Paris, see Edling, 1982. Biographical information about Scandinavian composers can be found in Helmer, 1980 (Emil Sjögren), Dale and Helmer, 1980 (Johan August Söderman), Bohlin, 1980 (Isidor Dannström), Grinde, 1980 (Agathe Grøndahl), and Öhrström, 1994b (Laura Netzel).

conservative style that marked most of her work.<sup>20</sup> In 1897 the Parisian newspaper *Le Figaro* had published one of her piano works,<sup>21</sup> and Synnestvedt would later translate the lyrics of one of her songs.<sup>22</sup>

Ten months later, the afternoon of 22 February 1904, Synnestvedt himself was involved in the presentation of a concert. Again it featured Sjögren in his Violin Sonata, accompanied by the violinist Mme L. Breitner (wife of the pianist who had performed in Lago's *Fantaisie*) and the singer Lola de Padilla in three of his songs. Before the final work, his Intermezzo for violin solo, Mlle S. Adrienne Breitner, presumably the daughter of the violinist, declaimed poetry written by King Oscar II in translations by Synnestvedt (spelled 'Synuestvedt'). It was common at the time to intersperse poetry with music at private salon concerts – although unusual, of course, to incorporate poetry by a monarch! This association suggests that those who organised or participated in this concert had no problem with the Swedish king, an ardent music-lover who, until the peaceful dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian union in June 1905, reigned over Norway as well as Sweden. That Synnestvedt apparently did not attend another performance of Sjögren's piano and violin sonata the following March suggests that he did not know of or make an effort to attend all such performances.

On 21 January 1906, the Swedish diplomatic legation sponsored its own concert. It featured only Swedish musicians, including Sven Kjellström and Emil Sjögren.<sup>23</sup> The singers Mme Nordin-Lundin (from the Stockholm Opera) and Mlle Holmstrand performed songs by Wagner, two French contemporaries Charles Lefèvre and André Messager, Sjögren himself and two relatively unknown composers, the Dane Bentzon and Meyer Holmlund. A harpist, Carl Lundin, played Oberthür's *Légende* for harp, and Kjellström, a Chopin nocturne transcribed by Sarasate and Hubay's *Zéphyr*. Both Mlle Holmstrand and Lundin had worked at the Opéra-Comique. Synnestvedt's presence here suggests his continuing support for

---

20 This was not the first time Backer-Grøndahl's music was performed in Paris. On 15 December 1893 at the Théâtre d'Application, the pianist Mme Roger-Miclos presented a concert called 'Modern Music' in which she featured French, Norwegian, and Russian music. Backer-Grøndahl's *Humoresque* and Grieg's *Scènes lyriques* represented Norway. Furthermore, on 29 October 1897, Mlle Rose Depecker presented four of her works – *Menuet*, *Toccata*, *Sérénade*, and *Danse norvégienne* – in a concert of the Salon du 'Figaro' called 'Musique Etrangère Moderne'. The concert featured only single works by other composers – Niels W. Gade's *Dans la forêt*, Sjögren's *Dors, chère prunelle*, and Grieg's *L'oiseau d'amour*, as well as music by composers from other countries.

21 A. Backer-Grøndahl, *Sérénade norvégienne pour piano*, *Le Figaro* (24 July 1897). In the explanatory text accompanying the musical score, 'Notre page musicale,' the author [René Lara, his name here not indicated] praised the work and called her 'one of the most remarkable female composers that we know.' The publication was also a way to promote the *Collection de musique étrangère*, forthcoming from the French publisher Enoch. On 21 August 1897, *Le Figaro* published Christian Sinding's 'Perles,' with its text translated by Catulle Mendès, also in Enoch's *Collection de musique étrangère*.

22 *Encore un rayon*, Opus 70 (Christiania: Bredrene Hals, 1907).

23 *Le Figaro's* literary supplement published his *La fraîche rosée* on 22 November 1908. Sjögren's music had also been performed in Paris that February.

Swedish music even as, after independence, he was increasingly identifying himself as a Norwegian and no longer working for the Swedish legation.

A few conclusions can be drawn from these concerts. First, although some of the concerts he frequented presented Norwegian music, the Nordic music concerts in Paris from 1902-06 that Synnestvedt attended featured mostly Swedish music and performers. For the most part, this was related to dominance of Swedes on Nordic concerts in Paris, perhaps a reflection of the relative importance of Sweden to the French, given the Swedish king and the Swedish royal family of French descent throughout the 19th century. Synnestvedt may also have considered his support of Swedish concerts as part of his job when he worked for the Swedish and Norwegian legations.

It is interesting to note the modest amount of Grieg that he went to hear before 1906 and the praise he lavishes on the composer after Norwegian independence. Although Grieg was performed relatively often in Paris, he appears in Synnestvedt's programs only four more times: three times on Lamoureux concerts – his piano concerto played by Teresa Carreno on 15 March 1903 and by Arthur de Greef on 29 November 1903, another with his orchestral suite *Peer Gynt* on 28 February 1904 – and once with *Soir dans les montagnes*, featuring an oboe soloist on the inaugural concert of the Société des Nouveaux Concerts in November 1904. Why Synnestvedt did not attend Grieg's return to conduct the Concerts Colonne on Sunday afternoon, 19 April 1903, is not clear. As in 1894, this was a concert of primarily Grieg's works.<sup>24</sup> The audience insisted on an encore of the last part of *Peer Gynt*, a work Synnestvedt appreciated for its roots in popular traditions. Again attracting record numbers as in 1894, including a large Norwegian component, they earned for the orchestra the season's second highest receipts. Was Synnestvedt out of town or otherwise occupied, or was he distressed at Grieg's criticism of the French during the Dreyfus Affair, which some took as an attack on the nation? One should not assume that such a criticism meant that Grieg was taking a position in the conflict, nor that Synnestvedt's coolness toward Grieg in 1903-04 was conscious or a reflection of his politics. By 1903 some French critics and composers, including Debussy and d'Indy, had turned scornful of Grieg, finding his music 'a little old-fashioned', even if Grieg had earlier been an important influence on French music.<sup>25</sup> When the most recent Grieg – his *Slåtter* (peasant dances), Op. 72 – was published, Synnestvedt shared it with

---

24 The program notes for this concert included an extensive discussion of Grieg's music. The annotator, probably Charles Malherbe, praised Grieg's music for its 'exotic perfume' derived from folk melodies, its 'mysterious charm,' and 'great spontaneity'.

25 Herresthal and Reznicek, 1994, pp. 256-257. In response to Grieg's criticism of the French amidst the Dreyfus Affair, in 1903 'the press called to demonstrate against Grieg the Dreyfusard' and certain critics such as Debussy and Pierre Lalo published reviews that were 'more ascerbic than usual' (Herresthal and Reznicek, 1994, pp. 219-228, 237-248).

his friends, Ravel, Calvocoressi, and other Apaches, who had maintained great respect for the composer.<sup>26</sup> Embracing Grieg as the quintessential Norwegian composer in his *Figaro illustré* article, Synnestvedt praises *Slåtter* as 'new proof' of his genius. His transcriptions of folk themes stylize what he borrowed, surrounding them 'with an appropriate harmony that gives a very personal atmosphere to his work, and yet an essentially national one'. For these reasons, Synnestvedt saw Grieg's music as a model for the 'future of music' (Synnestvedt, 1906b, p. 136).

Also puzzling is the virtual absence of Finnish music from the programs Synnestvedt collected. Sibelius only appears once – the first performance of his *Le Cygne de Tuonela* at the Concerts Lamoureux on 5 November 1905 – and Synnestvedt apparently missed the opportunity to hear rarely-performed Finnish music at the Concerts Colonne on 21 February 1904. The singer Ida Ekman presented six songs, including 'Paitaressu', a Finnish lullaby by Oskar Merikanto. The programme notes suggest that Finnish song resembles Swedish rather than Russian music and point out that while Sibelius is the most popular representative of Finnish music, Merikanto, a Finnish composer and organist (1868-1924), was also well-respected. Instead of hearing Finnish music, the next night, 22 February 1904 Synnestvedt attended a recital of chamber works ranging from Dvorák, Borodin and Wagner to Brahms at the concert hall of the Société d'Horticulture. This featured the pianist Ludovic Breitner, spouse of the violinist who just that afternoon had performed the two works by Sjögren in the concert described above. It is possible that his preference for hearing Sjögren that afternoon – or personal loyalties to those who performed his music – determined his choice of which concert to attend if he could not go to all three.<sup>27</sup> But, as a diplomat, political considerations may also have played a role. As Helena Tyräinen has pointed out, until 1917 Finland's complex relationship with Russia caused a severe division from Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. Märtha Norrback has suggested that after 1900 the French, given their need for the Franco-Russian alliance were wary of showing much support for Finnish in the event that this could be understood as supporting Finnish independence from Russia. She also makes this argument about Norwegian music and Norwegian independence from Sweden, though by 1906 and with Synnestvedt being hired to write about Norwegian culture for multiple Parisian journals, this is not convincing.<sup>28</sup>

---

26 Herresthal and Reznicek, 1994, pp. 261-62. These authors argue that it was through Synnestvedt that the Apaches discovered the 'new' Grieg.

27 Synnestvedt also went to hear Ludovic Breitner as piano soloist at the Concerts Colonne on 11 February 1906.

28 Märtha Norrback, 'La Question finlandaise' (1988), unpublished manuscript discussed in Tyräinen, 1998, pp. 117-118, 124-125..

Second, the same composers and performers recur on Synnestvedt's programs from one concert to the next. This suggests that certain Nordic musicians were able to build a following among the French public and/or the Nordic community in Paris. As a performing member of the Concerts Colonne, the violinist Kjellström was in a position to serve as intermediary. Interestingly, besides Sjögren, among the composers appearing numerous times on these programs were two women, Laura Netzel and Agathe Gröndahl. Performing composers, such as Gröndahl and Sjögren, used such opportunities to feature their own music.

Third, the tastes of the presenters who programmed Nordic music tended to be conservative. All the Nordic composers performed, except G. Hägg, were born in the 1850s or earlier and much of their music reflects a style infused by mid-century German romanticism. Only Sjögren, who came to Paris regularly, and to a lesser extent perhaps Hägg and Netzel, were influenced by their French contemporaries. Among the French composers included on these programs, the youngest too, Messenger, was born in 1853. The performance of Nordic folk songs and music incorporating folk traditions on many of these concerts suggests the desire not only to express nordic pride and the distinction of Nordic music, but also to cater to French taste for national differences.

After Norwegian independence, Synnestvedt's reviews suggest a possible change in his attitudes toward Swedish and Finnish music. In 1907, noting that the interesting part of the Concerts Lamoureux's repertoire in December 1906, were «repeats» of certain popular works by Borodin, Chabrier, Rimsky, and Liszt, he criticized their choice of Elgar, (whose music he found 'soporific'), Trémisot, Bachelet, and Goldmark 'as representatives of contemporary art' – as if 'to discourage the young public' from attending. In their place, Synnestvedt presents a list of composers never before performed by the Concerts Lamoureux and deserving their attention. Strangely, he suggests no Swedes, perhaps because the best ones had already received this honor. But he does include the Finn Merikanto and three lesser-known Norwegians (Halvorsen, Lie, and Losen, having reproduced examples of their scores his *Figaro illustré* article), along with three Russians (Rachmaninov, Akimenko, Kallinikov), three French (Ravel, Séverac and Roussel), two Germans (Pfitzner, Schillings), two Poles (Noskovski and Wieniawski), two Spaniards (Albeniz, Morera), two Austrians (Mahler, Thuille), two Americans (Loeffler, Farwell) and the Englishman Cyril Scott, many of them performers or conductors as well as composers (Synnestvedt, 1907b, p. 163). Such a group shows the international range of Synnestvedt's knowledge, interests, and tastes.

## Synnestvedt's Musical Preferences

Like this list, the programmes he collected and the concert reviews he wrote suggest that Synnestvedt's musical interests spanned from the conservative to the avant-garde. In addition, defending his preference for Dvorak's dances and quartets over his symphonies, his 'absolute eclecticism' included a belief in no hierarchy of value among musical forms (Synnestvedt, 1907b, p. 164). Of course, not all works on a programme are necessarily of interest to a listener. One might attend a concert out of curiosity, at the urging of friends, or as a subscriber. Moreover, eclecticism was highly valued in the French musical world since the 1880s and most concerts were assembled with this in mind.<sup>29</sup> One can argue for these programmes as expressions of interest or even 'taste' to the extent that one chooses concerts in which certain works take up all or most of the performance, and especially if a listener attends multiple performances of the same works.

Schumann stands out as among Synnestvedt's favorites. This composer appears on fifteen of Synnestvedt's programs, including the Concerts Lamoureux' chronological performance of his symphonies beginning in spring 1904, their first performance of his *Das Paradies und die Peri* on 13 March 1904, and their premiere of his *Faust* on 28 January 1906, two long oratorios. If his affinity for Schumann suggests a certain conservatism, Synnestvedt's openness to Wagner, the Russian 'Mighty Handful', and the contemporary avant-garde documents his adventurous spirit.

The programs Synnestvedt collected suggest that he sought out Wagner's music which, for some, symbolized the 'music of the future'. Synnestvedt attended a full concert performance of *Das Rheingold* at the Concerts Lamoureux on 19 October 1902, non-subscription concerts of his works there on 28 December 1902 and with Siegfried Wagner conducting on 1 March 1903, as well as fragments from *Parsifal* organized by the Société des Grandes Auditions Musicales on 31 March 1903. He went to hear the third act of *Götterdämmerung* four times in 1903 and 1904, and twice its prologue in 1907. He attended three concerts of mostly Wagner at the Concerts Lamoureux in 1904-05, and two at the Concerts Colonne in 1905. A pronounced taste for Wagner may explain one reason he preferred the Concerts Lamoureux over the Concerts Colonne for, more than Colonne, Chéviard, the conductor of the former, like his predecessor Charles Lamoureux, programmed Wagner on virtually all their concerts. In his *Figaro illustré* article on Norway (1906), Synnestvedt makes allusion to the Valhala (referred to in Wagner's *Ring of the Niebelungen*) in describing the kind of stories that lie at the origins of Norwegian literature (Synnestvedt, 1906b, p. 124), suggesting that certain cultural connections and

---

29 See chapter 6, 'An Ideology of diversity, eclecticism, and pleasure', of Pasler 2009.

the Viking sagas on which Wagner based his libretto themselves may underline his attraction to the composer's music.

The musical innovations of the five Russian composers of the 'Mighty Handful' also interested Synnestvedt, even if, from a French perspective, in competition with Wagner's over the direction French music should go. French critics associated Russian music's rhythmic freedom, melodic invention, and vigorous orchestration with French desire for physical and moral regeneration. Vitality in all its forms was coveted by many French in a period when the French birth rate was steeply declining, especially relative to other Europeans.<sup>30</sup> In the program notes for a 1902 concert of new Russian works at the Concerts Colonne, Charles Malsherbe called Russian folk song 'the actual inspiration for modern art' and suggested, 'It is perhaps from the North that will come the musical light ... of the future'. In his *Figaro illustré* article, Synnestvedt writes similarly that 'It will be the countries of the North that have understood the great artistic value of folk music [...] Norway like Russia' (Synnestvedt, 1906b, p. 135). Audiences, however, did not always agree. This 1902 concert earned the lowest receipts of the year at the Concerts Colonne. Nevertheless, the more important Russian works continued to be performed, and increasingly so.

Synnestvedt attended seventeen concerts with Russian works, not just at the Concerts Lamoureux where he may have heard them as a season subscriber, but also at the Société Nationale and various private salons. These include three performances of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Antar*, three of his *Capriccio espagnole*, two of his Piano concerto, as well as two of Borodin's Second Symphony. In February 1906 he also attended two recitals by visiting Russian performers, Ossip Gabrilowitsch and Julius Isserlis. In his *Mercure musical* reviews in 1907, Synnestvedt singles out Rimsky-Korsakov's works for their harmonic, rhythmic, and instrumental discoveries.

Although he also went to hear Richard Strauss conduct his own works on 29 March 1903 and Mahler's orchestral *Songs of a Wayfarer* on 26 February 1905, the greatest number of Synnestvedt's programs feature French music. Few concentrate on the most popular French composers of the day – Berlioz, Massenet, or Saint-Saëns – though Berlioz and Saint-Saëns appear on many of the concerts he attended, the former on fourteen of his programmes, the latter on eighteen of them, sometimes as a kind of French counterbalance to the appeal of Wagner. However, with the exception of an entire concert devoted to Berlioz' *Damnation de Faust* on the centenary of his birth and another where

---

30 France's growth rate from 1872 to 1911 was a mere 10 percent, as compared with European Russia's 78 percent, Germany's 58 percent, Great Britain's 43 percent, the Austro-Hungarian empire's 38 percent, Italy's 30 percent, and Spain's 20 percent. At the end of the century there were more deaths than births (from crime, syphilis, alcoholism, and suicide as well as natural causes).



his *Requiem* took up the entire second half, it is unlikely that these composers were the principal attraction for Synnestvedt. Unlike many concert-goers of this period who went often to hear Berlioz' *Damnation de Faust*, Synnestvedt attended only one performance of it on 20 December 1903. The composers he preferred were young, born in the 1860s or 70s, and many of them little-known.

When he had to choose, Synnestvedt often preferred to hear premieres of new French works over other tempting options.<sup>31</sup> For example, instead of going to hear and see Grieg conduct Colonne's orchestra in April 1903, the night before Synnestvedt went to a concert of the Société Nationale, a composer-run organization that specialized in giving premieres. This suggests that, if he did not want to attend concerts two nights in a row, he preferred to hear five new works by a range of French composers, including Duparc and Fauré, instead of Grieg, although this meant missing French premieres of Grieg's *En automne* and *A la porte du cloître*.

New French music even trumped new music from Sweden for him. Absent on his programs is the name of a Swedish composer, Helena Munktell (1852-1919). Since the late 1870s, she spent every winter in Paris studying first with Emile Durand (1877-1879), then Godard (1885-1892), and d'Indy until 1910 (Öhrström, 1994a). The Société Nationale featured her sonata on Saturday evening, 21 January 1905, a concert he chose to miss. The next day, Synnestvedt instead went to hear the premiere of a massive new work for soloists, chorus, and orchestra, *La Croisade des enfants*, by the composer/conductor Gabriel Pierné.

## Synnestvedt and New French Music

If we can assume that his collection of programmes coincided with his concert attendance, Synnestvedt began attending concerts of French contemporary music in 1902 and his curiosity about it escalated significantly in 1903. Seven of the concerts he attended that spring show his interest in a wide range of musical styles and genres by young as well as established French composers. That he went to hear not only premieres of new works, but multiple performances of some of them suggests a sincere desire to understand it.

On 4 January 1903 he heard 'five masterpieces of contemporary French music' presented by the Victor Charpentier's Association des Grands Concerts. It included Gustave Charpentier's *Napoli* (1889-90), and Dukas' *L'Apprenti sorcier* (1897) as well as Franck's *Le Chasseur maudit* (1881-82), Lalo's *Namouna* (1882), and Saint-Saëns's *Suite algérienne*

---

31 This passion undoubtedly helped win him the position as reviewer for *Mercure musical* whose readers wanted to hear most about first performances. Synnestvedt, 1907b, p. 160.

(1880). On 1 February 1903, he returned to the same venue for nine works by living French composers in a variety of genres,<sup>32</sup> plus an excerpt from Gluck's *Alceste*; on 5 April 1903 he heard Charpentier's orchestral suite, *Impressions d'Italie* at the Concerts Lamoureux (as well as two subsequent performance of the work in 1905 and on 19 February 1905 his dramatic symphony *La Vie du poète* at the Concerts Colonne); on 18 April 1903 a concert with five premieres at the Société Nationale;<sup>33</sup> on 21 April an all-Debussy concert at the Schola Cantorum; and on 10 May a piano recital that included four contemporary French works performed by Edouard Risler.<sup>34</sup> On 12 February 1904 he attended an all-Chausson concert given by the Quatuor Parent.<sup>35</sup> And, as noted above, on 22 January 1905, he went to hear Gabriel Pierné's massive *légende musicale, La Croisade des enfants*, premiered by the Concerts Colonne. When it came to the radical republican Alfred Bruneau, his symphonic poem *Penthésilée* was on two concerts Synnestvedt attended – on 22 March 1903 at the Concerts Lamoureux and on 9 April 1905 at the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire; however, the appeal of these programs could have been the prelude to Wagner's *Tristan*, also on both concerts.

Besides such programs, the concerts he attended fall into three groups: (1) those featuring the music of César Franck (1822-1890), the only deceased French composer found frequently on these programmes, together with composers who studied with him; (2) those at the Schola Cantorum – a private music school founded in 1894 by Charles Bordes, Vincent d'Indy, and the organist Alexandre Guilmant to promote religious music which, in its own special building beginning in 1900, presented its own concerts – and (3) those presenting the work of a loosely defined interdisciplinary group with no institutional affiliation who called themselves 'les Apaches'. Musicians associated with both the Schola and les Apaches became his personal friends and appeared on the nine concerts of the Société Nationale Synnestvedt attended from 1903-1907, each of which consisted of premieres by mostly young composers.

Synnestvedt clearly was drawn to Franck and Franck's students. To hear Franck's *Rédemption* on 9 March 1902, he had to gain entrance to the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, a concert series normally closed to all but subscribers and which may have

---

32 Lalo's Overture to *Le Roi d'Ys*, Saint-Saëns's Organ Symphony, the Entr'actes from Fauré's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Bourgault-Ducoudray's *Carnaval d'Athènes*, Théodore Dubois's *Romance religieuse* for violin, Alexandre Georges's *Légende bretonne*, d'Indy's Suite for trumpet, an excerpt from Gluck's *Alceste*, Xavier Leroux's ballet *Les Perses*, and Chabrier's *Espana*.

33 Charles Planchet's Sonate for violin and piano, Henri Woollett's *Prélude, Fugue, et Final* for piano, Georges-Martin Witkowski's Quartet in E major, two melodies by Henri Duparc, and Gabriel Fauré's *Pièces brèves* for piano.

34 Paul Dukas's *Variations, Interlude, et Final* (on a theme by Rameau), Chabrier's *Idylle*, Fauré's *Impromptu* in A flat, and Dubois's *Les Myrtilles*.

35 Chausson's works performed were his piano quartet, two songs (*Les Heures* and *Les Couronnes*), *Chansons perpétuelles* for quartet and piano, and his Concerto in D major for piano, violin, and string quartet.

entailed going to considerable trouble. This was the fourth program in his collection, and the first outside the Concerts Lamoureux. Synnestvedt attended another performance of *Rédemption* at the Concerts Lamoureux on 25 January 1903, his *Béatitudes* at the Concerts Colonne on 8 March 1903, and his Quintet at a recital by the pianist Berthe Durant on 29 April 1903. In October 1904 he went to three performances of Franck's Symphony in D minor, one of which was an all-Franck concert, and he also went to hear this on 18 March 1906 and 9 February 1908. As noted earlier, he also attended concerts entirely devoted to the music by Franck's students, Gabriel Pierné and Ernest Chausson. On a concert he reviewed in 1907, with Beethoven, Liszt, Wagner, Franck, and Fauré, Synnestvedt found interesting only Franck's *Djinns* and Liszt's *Mazeppa* (Synnestvedt, 1907b, p. 163).

However, Synnestvedt, like the Norwegians he described in his *Figaro illustré* article, did not believe in group-think. When it came to reviewing the symphony of Sylvio Lazari, whose music is indebted to both Franck and Wagner, Synnestvedt arrived positively predisposed, given the few composers who took on such a genre at the time. However, although he appreciated its 'rational and well-balanced construction' and its interesting harmonies and orchestration — in short, its *métier* — he criticized the symphony harshly for lacking in 'individuality', in any 'personal stamp'. Upholding a value he praised so highly in Norwegian culture and freely expressing his own opinion took precedence over encouraging a young composer writing in a tradition he otherwise respected (Synnestvedt, 1907d, p. 508).

How Synnestvedt got interested in the Schola is unclear.<sup>36</sup> We cannot know what attracted him to their concerts, but the programs document two possibilities. First, he could have been drawn into conversation with a Scholist at a performance of Franck's *Rédemption* on 9 March 1902. Franck was a deity for Scholist composers. Vincent d'Indy, whose music was deeply influenced by it, undoubtedly promoted his music in Schola classes. Second, Synnestvedt could have encountered the group at his first documented concert of contemporary French music on 21 March 1902. This performance of 5 premieres for wind instruments by mostly unknown French composers,<sup>37</sup> together with a horn *Reverie* by Glazunov, was directed by d'Indy, honorary president of the presenting organization, the Société de Musique Moderne pour Instruments à Vent. By fall, Synnestvedt was in direct contact with d'Indy. He received a letter from the composer

36 In our correspondence in January 2006, Malou Haine suggested that Séverac may have been responsible for his contact with the Schola.

37 D. Inghelbrecht's *Petite Suite* for chamber ensemble, Philippe Gaubert's *Pièce romantique* for flute, bassoon, and piano, E. Provinciali's *Danse villageoise* for flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon, A. Delacroix's *Pièce enfantine* for flutes, clarinet, and basson, J. Ehrhart's Suite for flute and piano, and Henri Woollett's Quintet in E major for flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon. All of these, except Woollett's Quintet, were premieres.

dated 20 October 1902 concerning d'Indy's new work, *L'Etranger*, based on Ibsen.<sup>38</sup> The composer possibly became interested in Synnestvedt because of his ties to Scandinavia. Moreover, in 1898 Synnestvedt had published an essay on Ibsen in which he argued for the cosmopolitan inspiration of Ibsen's play and the universal nature of its characters (Synnestvedt, 1898).

Synnestvedt attended the concert premiere of the prelude from Act 2 of d'Indy's *L'Etranger* at the Concerts Lamoureux on 18 January 1903, another performance of it there on 22 February, and a staged performance at the Opéra on 20 January 1904 where it had premiered on 4 December 1903. He remained enthusiastic about d'Indy's music, attending premieres of his Symphony in B flat on 6 March 1904, his *Symphony on a French Mountain Air* on 18 April 1905, and his *Jour d'été à la montagne* on 4 March 1906. Synnestvedt would have also shared with d'Indy his attraction to Wagner. D'Indy's music was sometimes paired with that of Wagner on concerts Synnestvedt attended (e.g. at the Concerts Lamoureux: 22 February 1903, 28 February 1904, 30 October 1904, 18 December 1904).

Synnestvedt also patronised other events sponsored by the Schola and the composers studying there. In December 1902 he attended the Schola's revival of Racine's *Esther* with incidental music by J.-B. Moreau, conducted by Charles Bordes. He heard premieres of large orchestral works by Arthur Coquard and chamber works by Albert Roussel, Marcel Labey, Guy Ropartz, among others. Works by Henri Woollett, now known principally as the author of a respected *History of Music*, appeared on eight of his programmes.<sup>39</sup> The first presented his Quintet in the wind-music concert conducted by d'Indy on 21 March 1902; the last documents a musical contribution to the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts on 11 June 1907. There are more programmes for concerts of Woollett's music than for any other young composer in Synnestvedt's collection, suggesting that the two may have been friends.

On 21 April 1903, the Schola also presented a concert devoted entirely to the works of Debussy with Lucienne Bréval from the Opéra, the pianist Ricardo Viñes, and the Quatuor Parent. After a performance of his Quartet, Debussy accompanied Bréval in his *Proses lyriques* and *Chansons de Bilitis*, and Viñes in a transcription for two pianos of his *Trois Nocturnes*. Viñes also performed Debussy's *Pour le piano*. Debussy would soon emerge as among Synnestvedt's favorites.

For Synnestvedt, Debussy's music represented most in France what he would later value in Norwegian art, 'personality through independence' (Synnestvedt, 1906b, p. 140).

---

38 Collection Nicole Bat.

39 Henri Woollett, born of English parents, was from Le Havre where he later directed a branch of the Schola Cantorum.

Since winning the Prix de Rome in 1884, French critics had remarked on Debussy's 'exuberant individuality' and 'personal nature'. Part of winning that year was the recognition by the director of the Académie des Beaux-Arts that the 'conditions of art have changed' and that 'individual sentiment is acquiring more authority even as science demands more from us'.<sup>40</sup> Intense interest in Debussy's music brought him closest to a group of young musicians, poets, painters, critics and music-lovers who called themselves 'les Apaches'.<sup>41</sup> Born mostly in the mid-1870s and therefore close in age to himself, these young men congealed as a group by attending concerts together, especially Debussy's opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Because resistance to *Pelléas* at its premiere on 30 April 1902 threatened future performances, they went to hear it repeatedly, reputedly thirty times, to help assure the work's success. A kind of 'sacred battalion', they shared a common belief in Debussy as a musical prophet.

Strangely, there is no record that Synnestvedt attended *Pelléas*. Still, besides the all-Debussy concert at the Schola in 1903, between 1902 and 1907 Synnestvedt attended seven performances of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. On 25 March 1904 he heard Debussy's *Estampes* by Ricardo Viñes and again his Quartet by the Quatuor Parent. And over the years, he also attended premieres of his *Danse sacrée et danse profane* for chromatic harp on 6 November 1904 at the Concerts Colonne, *La Mer* on 15 and 22 October 1905, as well as his orchestrated song, *Le Jet d'eau*, on 24 February 1907 at the Concerts Lamoureux.

In early spring 1904, when the musical amateur-turned-composer Maurice Delage rented a 'wigwam' – a small detached dwelling near Auteuil – the Apaches gathered there every Saturday night to discuss ideas and play music. As Léon-Paul Fargue once explained, 'Each week one of us had something to read, to declaim, to perform: a poem, a prose, a piece of music' in 'the friendliest atmosphere imaginable'. In Delage's memoirs about the period (Delage, 1939), he includes Synnestvedt among this group that included composers Maurice Ravel, Florent Schmitt, Déodat de Séverac, Paul Ladmirault, and Edouard Bénédictus, Ricardo Viñes (the pianist who premiered many of Debussy's and Ravel's piano works), conductor/composer Désiré-Emile Inghelbrecht, Marcel Chadeigne, the future choral conductor at the Opéra, the poets Léon-Paul Fargue and Tristan Klingensor, the critic and composer Emile Vuillermoz, the critic and Russian-music expert Michel Calvocoressi, the set-designers Paul Sordes and Georges Mouveau, the lithographer Léon Pivet, Igor Stravinsky (after 1910), and a number of others.<sup>42</sup>

---

40 Cited in Pasler, 2011, p. 334.

41 For a fuller discussion about this group, the origins of their name, the function of their meetings, and their aesthetic orientation, see Pasler, 1982, 1991b and 2007, and Haine 2006.

42 See also Fargue, 1939, p. 155. It is possible that Synnestvedt met Delage earlier than December 1903, the

What linked them was a common interest in not only Debussy, but also Russian music. They whistled a theme from Borodin's Second Symphony to get one another's attention at concerts and often sight-read Russian music transcribed for piano, four-hands. Ravel composed his *Jeux d'eau* under Balakirev's influence and set to song a number of poems from a volume by Klingsor entitled *Shéhérazade* (1903), perhaps after Rimsky-Korsakov's orchestral work of the same name. Calvocoressi wrote and lectured on Russian music, accompanied by Viñes at the piano, at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes on 23 March 1905, the programme for which is in Synnestvedt's collection.

The Apaches helped one another in a variety of ways. Not only did they collaborate frequently, and provide audiences for each member's new works; they were also a source of practical help. Delage notes that they sometimes stayed up all night copying parts for a composer in need. It is possible that Synnestvedt's knowledge of Russian was useful to the group. He may have helped translate elements of the Belaieff scores Ravel brought to their meetings or aided Calvocoressi in his extensive correspondence with Balakirev during this period, in his lectures and articles on Russian music, and in his contributions to the Russian journal, *Apollon*.

As Fargue and Viñes once explained, the Apaches considered concert-going to be one of the most important 'ways to serve'. The composer who most urgently required their support was Ravel, who before 1905 was relatively unknown to the Parisian public. When he failed to win the 1905 Prix de Rome, Vuillermoz led a scandal in the press, after which Ravel received far more attention from critics, publishers and the general public. Synnestvedt's programmes document a serious interest in Ravel. There are numerous premieres at the Société Nationale: on 17 May 1904 his *Shéhérazade* songs, on 6 January 1906 his *Miroirs* – a piano set dedicated to five Apaches – and on 12 January 1907 his song cycle *Histoires naturelles*. He also heard the orchestral version of *La Barque sur l'océan* (from *Miroirs*) at the Concerts Colonne on 3 February 1907. Synnestvedt's archives include a photograph of Ravel inscribed to him (Illustration 3).

Many of Synnestvedt's programmes reflect Apache participation. The highest number feature Ricardo Viñes as soloist, not only in smaller concerts, but also performing Debussy's *Images* and Balakirev's Sonata at the Société Nationale on 3 March 1906, Franck's *Variations symphoniques* at the Concerts Colonne on 18 March 1906, and Rimsky Korsakov's Concerto at the Concerts Lamoureux on 3 December 1905 and 9 February 1908. Other programmes are for private events involving lesser-known members of the

---

period described at the beginning of this article. In Vincent d'Indy's letter to Synnestvedt on 20 October 1902, he closes with, 'Mille choses à Maurice'. This could have been a reference to Maurice Delage, but it is not clear from the context.



Illustration 3: Maurice Ravel, with dedication to Magnus Synnestvedt. Collection Nicole Bat.

group – the composer/conductor Inghelbrecht, or his daughter as harpist, and the critic Vuillermoz. One includes children's music by Inghelbrecht and Vuillermoz' *Chansons canadiennes*, performed by students of Inghelbrecht's wife. Another such a concert was sponsored by the Apache composer Edouard Bénédictus and his wife. The one held on Saturday night, 24 March 1906, at the Salle Fourcroy across the street from their apartment in the seventeenth arrondissement documents not only the multi-talents of Apache composers, performers, and poets, but also their taste for such collaborations (see illustration 4). There is also in this collection a personal invitation to Calvocoressi's lecture on the modern French song at the Université populaire du Faubourg Saint-Antoine on 23 April 1907. And possibly because of his connection to Viñes, who was accompanying, he also received an invitation to Louis Laloy's lecture on music of the Far East on 15 January 1906. That Synnestvedt was invited to such events suggests his insider-status and devotion to his friends.

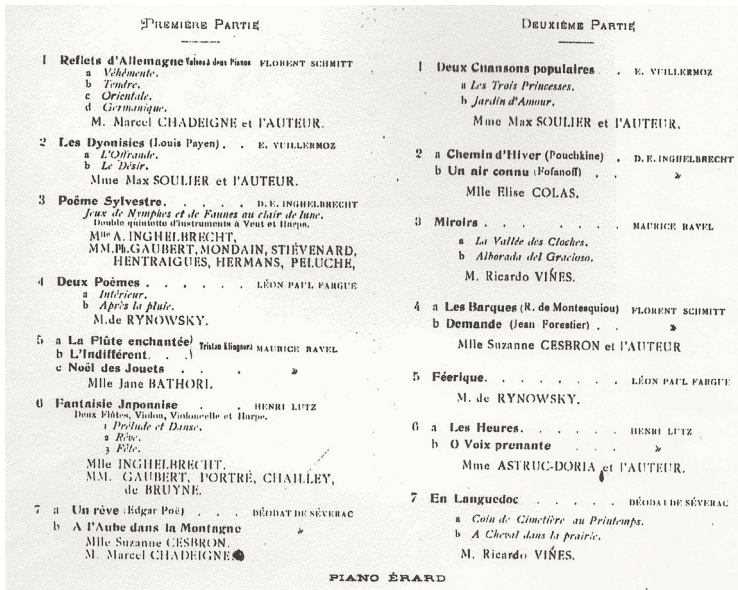


Illustration 4. Concert Program with Apache members, 24 March 1906. Collection Nicole Bat.

Synnestvedt shared several additional preoccupations with his Apache friends. First, like them, he saw indigenous folksong as a source of artistic renewal. Echoing French discourse from the late nineteenth century, he writes: 'popular music is the natural and vibrant expression of the genius of a race, its desires, instincts, sorrows and joys'. In Norway, he points out, geography and culture had kept the Norwegian race 'pure' over the centuries. From this perspective, he suggests that the indigenous song of the Norwegian rural country – long isolated from European influences and still using old modes – inspired the harmonic and rhythmic ideas of Grieg, whom Ravel and his Apache friends much admired. Like the French, he believed that folksong promised 'a powerful originality' for all who looked to it for inspiration (Synnestvedt 1906b, pp. 125, 134, 135). In his *Figaro illustré* essay, he reproduced facsimilies of four transcriptions of Norwegian folksong, reflecting a range of interpretations and methodologies.

Synnestvedt's observations on the genre, in fact, allowed him to bridge the differences between the perspectives of Vincent d'Indy and French republicans. In Norway, he points out, the isolation of the mountains allowed folk songs to 'evolve in opposite directions,' that is, the development of secular dances in some towns and religious music in others, giving rise to very different styles. In France, 19<sup>th</sup>-century scholars argued that, in their origin, *chansons populaires* were one or the other. Republicans saw them as harking back to the music of the troubadours and trouvères, that is, secular music, whereas d'Indy understood the oldest ones in France as religious in origin because they used the old



church modes. And, while Synnestvedt and French republicans saw them as a source of national identity, d'Indy and the Scholists focused on regional rather than national traits, and considered them representative of regional rather than national customs. Many of them coming from aristocratic roots, Scholists wished to use such songs to revive the power and status of the provinces, wherein lay their natural consistency, to diffuse the power of republican-controlled Paris. Different purposes thus were linked to different meanings. Among the Apaches, Ladmiraault and Séverac, who had both studied at the Schola, looked to the folk songs of where they were born, Brittany or Languedoc, as inspiration for their music. In contrast, Ravel, Inghelbrecht, and Vuillermoz turned abroad for their inspiration, writing their own versions of the 'chansons populaires' of foreign countries. Pierre Aubry had asked Ravel to set some Greek songs to draw attention to Greek oppression. Vuillermoz set folk songs from Canada. Several are represented on the private Apache concerts Synnestvedt attended.

Synnestvedt's attitude toward folk songs was more idealist: they were an authentic, living tradition, albeit with significant symbolic function, rather than what we might today call an invented tradition, capable of being shaped to serve various purposes, even mutually exclusive ones, as in France. Synnestvedt's interest in authenticity led to his utter rejection of Dvorak's *New World Symphony*, whose many shortcomings, from his perspective, were most likely the result of the 'quite clumsy pretensions of this symphony to its Americanism' — 'one does not uproot oneself with impunity' (Synnestvedt, 1906e). This interpretation was later criticized.<sup>43</sup>

Second, like his Parisian friends in the avant-garde, Synnestvedt valued freedom and independence, artists seeking freedom from the constraints of nineteenth-century conventions. As noted earlier, he praised what he saw as an 'indestructible love of independence', a 'passion for individual autonomy' and 'the pursuit of personality' in Norwegian art (Synnestvedt, 1906b). 'From the beginning, Norwegian music never requires any common discipline, any artificial ideal, from its creators. Each of them follows the laws of his own temperament'. Even with folksong, he denies any collective authorship, instead arguing for the individual effort recorded in them. Valuing his own independent judgment, Synnestvedt felt free to criticize, despite his friendship with Apache composers and his deep respect for their work. As in his review of Lazzari's symphony, Synnestvedt was not shy about expressing his reserve for the music of Gabriel Fauré, whom his friends

---

43 The next month, William Ritter responded to Synnestvedt's review, not only noting the symphony's success in Prague and Vienna, but also contesting Synnestvedt's assumption that the composer was trying to imitate American music. Instead, Ritter suggested that the work was an expression of Dvorak's nostalgia for his homeland and so inherently Czech (Ritter, 1907). After rebutting all this, Synnestvedt apparently ceased writing reviews or any other kind of criticism in the French press.

idealized and would later elevate, with Debussy and Ravel, as part of a new musical trinity. Writing in *Mercure musical*, a journal read by the avant-garde, Synnestvedt called Fauré's *Ballade* utterly 'uninteresting' even if well-played by Cortot. And when it came to the Apache Florent Schmitt, his praise for the composer's *Musiques de plein air*, even after a second hearing, was muted. The work, that imitates no one and has a 'powerful musicality, classing the composer among the young musicians on whom we are counting on most for the future', nonetheless suggests that the composer was 'not entirely free of the influences coming from his musical education' (Synnestvedt, 1907b, pp.161-162, reviewing a concert on 16 December 1906). Moreover, Schmitt has perhaps 'too much will' and should 'follow his nature [...], his instinct'. Perhaps the composer himself and other friends felt similarly of his sometimes heavy, German-influenced style, for they apparently remained friends (see below).

Synnestvedt's language here belies the voice of an insider. Its tone, which speaks as much about the current state of French music as its words, echoes language used by Apaches and Scholists who both considered writing a form of propaganda and often used exaggerated rhetoric to make their points. Since 1900, Vuillermoz thought 'guerrilla tactics' were 'indispensable for the life blood of the arts' (Vuillermoz, 1969, p. 29).<sup>44</sup> Vuillermoz and d'Indy, 'high priests' of new but opposing orthodoxies, considered their cohorts 'believers', 'apostles', and sometimes 'martyrs' and their work informed by a sense of 'mission'.<sup>45</sup> One also senses in Synnestvedt's reviews a missionary-like commitment to the truth as he sees it, though, in the case of his attack on Dvorak, it may have cost him his position at the journal.

Two other articles by Synnestvedt express a third idea shared with Apaches: a belief in musical progress. In February 1906 he published a summary-review of Louis Laloy's lecture on Asian music, an important source of new ideas for both Debussy and Ravel (Synnestvedt, 1906a). Here he compares Chinese music, with its 'savage' expression and 'noisy' orchestra, to Wagner's music and Japanese music, more 'sweet, modest and simple', to that of Debussy. The essay ends with a discussion of Oriental influences on 'our young school', that is, the Apache generation, and Viñes' performance of Debussy's *Pagodes*. In his 1906 article on Debussy's music in *Aftenposten*, published two days before a concert of his music at the Oslo National Theater, Synnestvedt writes of Debussy in terms that recall the Nordic artists he discusses in *Figaro illustré*: who 'create something

---

44 As a music critic, Vuillermoz defined as his 'mission' to 'defend' Fauré, Debussy and Ravel, to 'clarify their still unformulated gospel, to open up a path for them in the hostile crowd, to support and order all of the divergent ideas which were circulating', and 'to identify the imposters and to focus on the musicians of good intent' (Vuillermoz, 1969, p. 22).

45 For more on the heated critical debates following Debussy's *Pelléas*, see Pasler, 1987. See also Vuillermoz, 1907 and 1957, pp. 92-105.

unique simply by following their nature and at the same time greatly expand the limits of the art that they worship' (cited in Andersen, 2000, p. 38).



Illustration 5. Photograph c. 1906 featuring Mathilde de Fournas, future wife of Magnus Synnestvedt, third from the left at the piano as Déodat de Sévérac and Ricardo Viñes perform. Others are Sévérac relatives.

In this context Synnestvedt became friendly with his future wife, Mathilde de Fournas.<sup>46</sup> A pianist, she is depicted in a photograph c. 1906 standing next to the piano as Déodat de Sévérac and Viñes play four hands (illustration 5). Her cousin, Déodat de Sévérac, was both a member of the Apaches and a student at the Schola Cantorum.<sup>47</sup> His music was featured in several concerts that Synnestvedt attended. According to Synnestvedt's daughter, her parents married in Norway on their vacation (on trips there in early June or early October 1906). However, in his correspondence, Sévérac notes that he played organ at their marriage in St. Félix on 9 May 1908 (Sévérac, 2002).<sup>48</sup> Their first

---

46 Mlle de Fournas was the daughter of the Baron Fernand de Fournas.

47 In a bound volume belonging to Mathilde de Fournas, there is a musical tune with the indication, 'Valse lent, extrait de *la Faustine*, opéra-ballet en 2 actes de Déodat de Sévérac, October 1901, à la gentille cousine Titi de Fournas'. Collection Nicole Bat.

48 I'm grateful to Malou Haine for pointing this out.

child was born earlier, in June 1907. A bound volume of good wishes for the child dated June 1907 to July 1908 documents Synnestvedt's friends and acquaintances from this period. It includes signatures from the Russian singer Chaliapine and Félix Blumenfeld, in addition to more substantial items:

- a poem by Albert Bausil
- the opening of *Sonatine*, second movement, signed 'en souvenir très sympathique, Maurice Ravel 6/6/07'
- an excerpt from the sixth of the piano pieces, *Musiques intimes*, by Florent Schmitt June 1907
- one of the *Nocturnes* by Léon-Paul Fargue
- a short text by Charles Louis Philippe, June 1907
- *Le Jardin mouillé* (text by Henri de Régnier) by Albert Roussel, July 1907

After July 1908 Magnus stopped collecting his concert programs and the family maintained no further record of contact with musicians. However, they continued to open their home to gatherings where people performed music – Synnestvedt appears numerous times in Ricardo Vines' journal from 1909-1912.<sup>49</sup> We do not know how he made his living during this period, perhaps in a budding career as a lawyer or continuing as a diplomat. It is possible he and his family left Paris because of the war.<sup>50</sup>

\* \* \*

Deeply idealistic about what he loved and unafraid to criticize what he did not, ironic paradoxes permeate Magnus Synnestvedt's tastes. For example, he praises Munthe for 'laying down the foundations of a new folk art' in Norway, wherein 'the strangest archaic art feeds the freest imagination'. Then he criticizes Munch for following this path, while admitting that Munch's work was made possible by that of Munthe. The pejorative references to 'international art' seem to be directed to German art, and yet when it came to German music, Synnestvedt had no such objections. Grieg studied in Leipzig, but in taking inspiration from Lindeman's folk song volume, the result was a 'profound amalgam' with great potential at influencing the future of music (Synnestvedt, 1906b, pp. 130, 132-33, 136).

---

49 That is, on 20 January 1909 at their new house in Neuilly, 11 rue St Pierre; on 22 August 1910 when they went to hear Viñes play in Béziers; in December 1910 when they had their friends over every Wednesday; on 5 February 1912 when Viñes spent the evening with them; and in May 1912 when Séverac's correspondence mentions them still in Paris. Malou Haine generously shared these details with me.

50 Thanks to a communication from Chantal Dupré la Tour (22 January 2009), I learned that Magnus, her great uncle, divorced Mathilde de Fournas after World War I, then married Peggy, an American who died around the time of the armistice, then a much younger woman, the Norwegian Alice Resch Synnestvedt, who wrote a memoir, *Over the Highest Mountains: A Memoire of Unexpected Heroism in France during World War II* (Pasadena, Intentional Productions, 2005). In it, we learn that the couple met in the resistance movement in Paris in the 1940s. She gives the date of his death as 1950.

Paradox also characterizes his relationship to the musical world of Paris at the beginning of the twentieth century. First, the relatively conservative tastes reflected on his earliest programmes – Schumann and especially Franck – may have drawn him to the approach to new music taught at the Schola Cantorum. D'Indy, one of the founders of the Schola, considered Franck one of his most important predecessors for his moral stance toward music and the importance he gave to musical structure. D'Indy viewed musical progress as a spiral, with the future built necessarily on the past.<sup>51</sup> At the Schola he attempted to give musicians an in-depth knowledge of counterpoint and musical form; there was less emphasis on harmonic nuance and virtuosity of execution. As a result, the composers trained there were less oriented toward opera than at the Conservatoire and open to a different range of influences than many of their peers. Synnestvedt's curiosity about their music brought him into contact with a generation with real power in the musical world of Paris between the two wars. At the same time, he apparently did not attend the Concerts Lamoureux's first performance on 21 January 1906 of Arthur Coquard's symphonic suite, *En Norvège* (published 1907), written most likely in response to Norwegian independence. Coquard, an older composer (b. 1846), had been a student of Franck.

Second, that Synnestvedt's attraction to musical innovation led him to Wagner, held up as a musical model by d'Indy, does not deny the fact that Wagner was the arch-enemy of his friends, the Apaches, who sought a more French-inflected approach to musical progress. Although Debussy borrowed chordal figurations and leitmotifs as well as an approach to music drama from Wagner, many of his advocates agreed that future composers, in Debussy's words, should look 'après Wagner', beyond Wagner, not 'd'après Wagner', inspired by Wagner. Synnestvedt continued to attend frequent performances of Wagner's music through October 1905, even if they conflicted with performances of music by his closest musical friends, suggesting a certain openness in his musical tastes.

Third, like Sévérac and Calvocoressi, Synnestvedt had links to *both* Scholists and Apaches, even if in many ways their aesthetic orientations were diametrically opposed.<sup>52</sup> The musical world of Paris was small enough that, although aesthetic differences were crucial in achieving what Pierre Bourdieu has called, 'distinction', most venues were shared. Young composers had to band together to achieve adequate recognition and support. The Société Nationale allowed all kinds of musicians to belong and contribute, regardless of aesthetic orientation – that is, until 1909. When d'Indy as president refused

---

51 For a discussion of this idea, see Pasler, 1991a.

52 See Pasler 1991b for discussion of the similarities and differences between the two intersecting groups.

to programme a work by Maurice Delage, the Apaches rebelled, after which a new performance organisation emerged, the Société Musicale Indépendante.<sup>53</sup>

This tolerance for paradox was arguably related to Synnestvedt's independence, a trait he so valued in all art and music that he admired. It was also the mark of a good diplomat, as was his willingness to evolve, to adapt to changing circumstances. Paradox also permeates his politics. He translated poetry by the Swedish king for use in a 1904 concert in Paris, and yet only two years later, on the occasion of Norwegian independence, he embraced freedom as 'the astonishing coincidence between artistic movement and the political evolution' in his country (Synnestvedt, 1906a, p. 140). To help celebrate Norway's independence and 'reinforce cultural links' between France and the new political entity, Synnestvedt helped organise concerts of Norwegian music in Paris (Herresthal and Reznicek, 1994, p. 260).<sup>54</sup> He also became a cultural ambassador of French music to his countrymen back home. It is in this spirit then that one should read his 1906 *Aftenposten* article on Debussy. Having visited Norway twice that year, Synnestvedt presumably understood the tastes of the Norwegian public and, sensing a wide gap between Nordic and French musical expectations, carefully chose his proselytising, if not exaggerated, rhetoric. The chilly reception Norwegian critics gave Debussy's music that year merely reiterates what has been suggested here: namely, that it was important to have someone like Synnestvedt, with his passionate idealism, bridge the cultural differences between Norway and France.

## References

- Andersen, Rune, 2000. 'The Reception of the Music of Debussy in Norway from its First Performance in 1906 to the Outbreak of the Second World War.' *Cahiers Debussy* 24, pp. 33-50.
- Bergsagel, John, 1980. 'Johan Svendsen.' *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan, 18, pp. 389-392.
- Bohlin, Folke, 1980. 'Isidor Dannström.' *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan, 5, p. 230.
- Calvocoressi, M.D., 1903. ' "L'Etranger" et l'Esthétique de Vincent d'Indy.' *La Tribune de Saint-Gervais* (April), pp. 147-151.
- Dale, Kathleen and Axel Helmer, 1980. 'Johan August Söderman.' *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan, 17, pp. 439-440.
- Deak, Frantisek, 1993. *Symbolist Theater. The Formation of an Avant-Garde*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Delage, Maurice, 1939. 'Les Premiers Amis de Ravel.' *Maurice Ravel par quelques-uns de ses familiers*. Paris: Editions du tambourinaire, pp. 97-113.
- Duchesneau, Michel, 1997. *L'Avant-garde musicale à Paris de 1871 à 1939*. Liège: Mardaga.
- Edling, Anders, 1982. *Franskt i svensk musik: 1880-1920 : stilpåverkan hos parisstuderande*

---

53 For a study of this concert society and a list of its programs, see Duchesneau 1997.

54 Possibly for this reason, he traveled to Oslo twice, in June and October 1906, to meet with the conductor of these concerts, Johan Halvorsen of the National Theater. During that time, he also attended two orchestral concerts conducted by Halvorsen, an organ concert, and Halvorsen's 4-act opera, *Fossegrimen*.

- tonsättare och särskilt hos Emil Sjögren*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell.
- Edling, Anders, 2000. 'La Réception de Debussy en Suède jusqu'en 1926.' *Cahiers Debussy* 24, pp. 23-32.
- Fargue, Léon-Paul, 1939. 'Autour de Ravel.' *Maurice Ravel par quelques-uns de ses familiers*. Paris: Editions du tambourinaire, pp. 153-161.
- Grinde, Nils. 1980. 'Agathe Gröndahl.' *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan, 7, p. 740.
- Haine, Malou, 2006. 'Clpa Godebski et les Apaches.' *Revue Belge de Musicologie* 60, pp. 221-266.
- Helmer, Axel, 1980. 'Emil Sjögren.' *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie. London: Macmillan, 17, pp. 361-362.
- Herresthal, Harald and Danièle Pistone, eds., 1996. *Grieg et Paris : romantisme, symbolisme, et modernisme franco-norvégiens*. Caen : Université de Caen.
- Herresthal, Harald and Ladislav Reznicek 1994. *Rhapsodie norvégienne, Les musiciens norvégiens en France au temps de Grieg*, trad. Chantal de Batz. Caen: Office Franco-Norvégien de l'Université.
- Lacombe, Hervé, 1997. *Les Voies de l'opéra français*. Paris: Fayard.
- Leygues, Georges, 1894. *Discours prononcé par le Ministre de l'Instruction publique et des Beaux-Arts, séance publique annuelle du 4 août 1894*. Paris: Imprimerie nationale.
- Öhrström, Eva, 1994a. 'Helena Munktell.' *New Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*, eds. Julie Ann Sadie and Rhian Samuel. London: Macmillan, p. 340.
- Öhrström, Eva, 1994b. 'Laura Netzel.' *New Grove Dictionary of Women Composers*, eds. Julie Ann Sadie and Rhian Samuel. London: Macmillan, p. 346.
- Parmentier, Georges, 1906. 'Le Divorce scandinave.' *La Revue diplomatique* (2 September), p. 7.
- Pasler, Jann, 1982. 'Stravinsky and the Apaches.' *Musical Times* (June), pp. 403-407.
- Pasler, Jann, 1987. 'Opéra et Pouvoir. Forces à l'oeuvre derrière le scandale du *Pelléas* de Debussy.' Trans. Odette Filloux and Jann Pasler. *La Musique et le Pouvoir*, eds. Hugues Dufourt and Joël-Marie Fauquet. Paris: Aux Amateurs de Livres, pp. 147-177.
- Pasler, Jann, 1991a. 'France: Conflicting Notions of Progress.' *Man and Music: The Late Romantic Era*, vol. 5, ed. Jim Samson. London: Macmillan, pp. 389-416.
- Pasler, Jann, 1991b. 'La Schola Cantorum et les Apaches: L'enjeu du pouvoir artistique ou Sévéric médiateur et critique.' *La musique: du théorique au politique*, eds. Hugues Dufourt and Joël-Marie Fauquet. Paris: Klincksieck, pp. 313-335.
- Pasler, Jann, 2007. 'A Sociology of les Apaches: Sacred Battalion for *Pelléas*.' *Berlioz and Debussy: sources, contexts and legacies*, ed. Barbara Kelly. London: Ashgate, pp. 148-166.
- Pasler, Jann, 2009. *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pasler, Jann, 2011. 'Politique nationale et esthétique française dans les cantates du prix de Rome (1870-1900).' *Le Prix de Rome de Musique (1803-1968)*, eds. Alexandre Dratwicky and Julia Lu. Lyon: Symétrie. pp. 323-345.
- Ritter, William, 1907. 'Chronique tchèque.' *Mercure musical* (15 January), pp. 95-98.
- Rollum-Larsen, Claus, 2000. 'The Early Reception of Claude Debussy and His Works in Copenhagen.' *Cahiers Debussy* 24, pp. 51-56.
- Sévéric, Déodat de, 2002. *La Musique et les lettres*, ed. Pierre Guillot. Liège: Mardaga.
- Strasser, Michael, 2007. 'Grieg, the Société Nationale, and the Origins of Debussy's String Quartet.' *Berlioz and Debussy: sources, contexts and legacies*, ed. Barbara Kelly. London: Ashgate.
- Strindberg, August, 1895a. 'De l'infériorité de la femme.' *La Revue Blanche* VIII, 39, pp. 1-16.
- Strindberg, August, 1895b. 'La Psycho-physiologie de la prière.' *La Revue Blanche* VIII, 46, pp. 385-390.
- Strindberg, August, 1896. 'Exposition Edouard Munch.' *La Revue Blanche* X, 72, pp. 525-526.
- Synnestvedt, Magnus, 1898. 'Ibsen et la femme scandinave.' *La Revue d'art dramatique* 4 (April), pp. 51-55.
- Synnestvedt, Magnus, 1906a. 'Musique d'Extrême-Orient.' *Mercure musical* (15 February), pp. 170-173.

- Synnestvedt, Magnus, 1906b. 'Norvège.' *Figaro illustré* (June), pp. 121-140.
- Synnestvedt, Magnus, 1906c. 'Norvège.' *L'Art et les artistes* 4 (October 1906-March 1907), p. xix.
- Synnestvedt, Magnus, 1906d. 'Claude Debussy Reformer, Skaber, Digter. Nye Baner i Musiken.' *Aftenposten* (7 December).
- Synnestvedt, Magnus, 1906e. 'Revue du mois: Concerts Lamoureux.' *Mercure musical* (15 December), pp. 421-422.
- Synnestvedt, Magnus, 1906f. *Aftenposten* (30 December).
- Synnestvedt, Magnus, 1907a. 'Debussy à Christiania.' *Mercure musical* (15 February), p. 160.
- Synnestvedt, Magnus, 1907b. 'Concerts Lamoureux.' *Mercure musical* 3,2 (15 February), pp. 160-165.
- Synnestvedt, Magnus, 1907c. 'Norvège.' *L'Art et les artistes* 5 (April-September), pp. 317-318.
- Synnestvedt, Magnus, 1907d. 'Concerts Chéviillard.' *Mercure musical* 3,5 (15 May), pp. 507-510.
- Tyräinen, Helena, 1998. 'Sibelius at the Paris Universal Exposition of 1900.' *Sibelius Forum. Proceedings from the Second International Jean Sibelius Conference, Helsinki November 25-29, 1995*, eds. Veijo Murtomäki, Kari Kilpeläinen and Risto Väisänen. Helsinki: Sibelius Academy. Department of Composition and Music Theory, pp. 114-128.
- Tyräinen, Helena, 2000. 'Les Origines de la réception de Debussy en Finland (1901-1933).' *Cahiers Debussy* 24, pp. 3-22.
- Tyräinen, Helena, 2003a. 'Helsinki, Saint-Petersburg, Paris. The Franco-Russian Alliance and Finnish-French Musical Relations.' *Finnish Music Quarterly* 1, pp. 52-59.
- Tyräinen, Helena, 2003b. 'Grieg.' *Dictionnaire de la musique en France au XIXe siècle*, ed. Joël-Marie Fauquet. Paris: Fayard, pp. 537-538.
- Vallas, Léon, 1950. *Vincent d'Indy*, 2. Paris: Albin Michel.
- Vuillermoz, Emile, 1907. 'Debussy et les Debussystes.' *Nouvelle Presse* (26 February).
- Vuillermoz, Emile, 1957. *Claude Debussy*. Geneva: René Kister.
- Vuillermoz, Emile, 1969. *Gabriel Fauré*. Trans. Kenneth Schapin. Philadelphia: Chilton.

## Abstract

During the Belle Epoque, the French public was increasingly drawn to Nordic music as well as art and theater. Magnus Synnestvedt (1879-1947), a young lawyer whose father served as the Norwegian vice-consul in Paris and who himself worked for the Swedish and Norwegian legations there, was ideal to serve as an ambassador between French and Scandinavian culture. He translated the poetry of the Swedish king and patronized many Swedish musicians. After Norway declared its independence, Magnus became a major advocate for Norwegian culture in Paris.

This article, based on the concerts Synnestvedt attended from 1902-1908 and the reviews of art and music he published in the French and Norwegian press, document both the presence of Nordic music in Paris and his diverse musical tastes. A man of paradox with a willingness to evolve in his musical tastes as well as his politics, Synnestvedt embraced not only the music of Schumann, Wagner, and Franck, but also, increasingly, that of the Russian Five and French avant-garde, especially Debussy and Ravel. In their music, he found what he also admired in certain Nordic art and music, that is, a love of freedom and independence as well as a fascination with indigenous folk songs as a source of artistic renewal. His passionate idealism helped bridge the cultural differences between Scandinavia and France.



### Keywords

Paris avant-garde, Ravel, Magnus Synnøstvedt, les Apaches, cultural diplomacy, Scandinavian-French, Norwegian-French connections, Parisian concerts

### The Author

Jann Pasler, professor of music at UC San Diego and editor of AMS Studies in Music for OUP, has recently published *Writing through Music: Essays on Music, Culture, and Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2007), *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France*, (University of California Press, 2009) – the latter winning an ASCAP Deems Taylor Award (2010), and *Saint-Saëns and his World* (Princeton University Press, 2012). In spring 2015, Editions Gallimard will publish a French version of *Composing the Citizen*. A new book, based on research since 1991 in France, Morocco, Tunisia, Senegal, and Vietnam, is in progress: *Music, Race, and Colonialism in the French Empire, 1880s-1950s*.