

***Revue Pleyel* (1923-1927)**

The *Revue Pleyel* [REP] was published monthly in Paris from September 1923 until August 1927. It produced forty-eight issues, each containing thirty-four pages. Journal of the important manufacturer of pianos, the *Revue Pleyel* attracted famous collaborators, built a network of foreign correspondents, and undoubtedly benefited from the prestige of the piano-making firm created in 1807 by Ignace Pleyel. This accomplished musician and inventor of genius received moral and/or financial support from well-known musical personalities such as Kalkbrenner, Rossini, Méhul, Hummel and Moscheles. Under the leadership of Camille Pleyel, the son and successor to Ignace,¹ the salons on rue Cadet were used as concert rooms, as were later the salons on the rue Rochechouart.² These locations were privileged venues in nineteenth-century Parisian musical life. Camille “launched” Chopin at his establishment in 1832, and thereafter, other famous musical celebrities, including Thalberg, Kalkbrenner, then Franck, Gounod, Saint-Saëns, Grieg, Debussy, de Falla, Stravinsky, Honegger, Robert and Gaby Casadesus associated their talent with the name of Pleyel³ by performing in its concert venues.

“However the concert room on rue Rochechouart did not possess the qualities required to accommodate large orchestras.⁴ This led, in the early 1920s, to Gustave Lyon’s project⁵... to have a new Concert hall of a three thousand seat capacity built according to scientific standards and following the latest developments in terms of acoustics, which were then considered revolutionary.”⁶ Completed in 1927, the Salle Pleyel⁷ was, at the time, the first Parisian artistic center of its kind. With this new space, the spirit of the famous Pleyel salons took on another dimension.

The entire journal consists of four oblong volumes, measuring 8.26 inches by 10.23, in the style of published piano music of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The pagination begins anew for each issue until number 32 of October 1926; thereafter it is continuous between issues. The cardboard cover page of each issue combines sobriety and elegance: underneath the *Revue* title is centered the famous portrait of Ignace Pleyel in profile.⁸ Set first in an oval frame, then in a gold rectangular frame starting with number 37 (October 1926), the medallion has a different background color each month. The caption reads: “Ignace Pleyel (1757-1831).” At the bottom of the page are, in the left

¹ Camille Pleyel took over the direction of the firm in 1824.

² Built by Camille Pleyel at 22 rue Rochechouart in 1848.

³ Moreover, the singers Pauline Viardot and Cornélie Falcon owned Pleyel pianos; Wanda Landowska would occasionally leave her Pleyel harpsichord to play on her Pleyel piano.

⁴ At the time no concert hall in Paris had the required qualities, and concerts were given in large theaters without their acoustical properties being taken into account.

⁵ Director of the Pleyel Society, *polytechnicien*, *ingénieur des Mines* and excellent musician.

⁶ “Historique de la salle,” Press review, Ministry of Culture and Communication (11 December 2003): 1-2.

⁷ Located on rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré, this 550-seat hall was dedicated to all forms of creative activity.

⁸ This is a reproduction of the engraving by Biosse after Guérin.

corner, the issue number and the month of publication, and in the opposite right corner one reads “Published monthly.”

The accomplishments of the *Revue Pleyel* are summarized in its last issue, August 1927; which concludes with a note “To the Reader”:

The *Revue Pleyel* reaches with the current issue the conclusion of its fifth year of publication. Since its inception, it published a significant number of articles, often quoted or reproduced in the French and foreign press, thus making it a first-rate documentary resource. Its very success forces it to change its format. The proportions it had adopted no longer corresponding to its relevance, nor to its distribution, it will merge on 15 October with the new journal *Musique*, a monthly publication totaling sixty pages.⁹

However, the journal *Musique* did not appear and the merger did not take place. Somehow, the *Revue Pleyel* might have been a victim of its own success.

There is no mention of an editor in the *Revue Pleyel* and few articles are signed. Yet one cannot fail to notice the extensive contribution of the eminent writer Roland-Manuel. In the first issue of October 1923, the Editorial Board defines the aim of the publication:

To create a free forum—without any distinction of school—to deal with all questions of interest to the artistic world, to bring to light autograph documents preciously kept in the archives of the Pleyel Firm and of others, to add to the rarity of these documents a variety likely to smooth out too severe an impression.

A large part will be devoted to current events and each issue will provide as faithful an account as possible of all musical events in Paris, in the provinces and in foreign countries. The last part of the journal will be dedicated to technical matters.¹⁰

Among other things, the *Revue Pleyel* contains information about the activities and creations of the prosperous Pleyel factories, from which pianos were exported, from the beginning of the nineteenth-century to European countries and to the New World. Thus, the journal regularly relates the technical innovations and creations forthcoming from the factory. A photograph of a new piano, amongst the best appointed, is presented at the end of each issue; such an instrument, made of precious wood and ornamented with bronzes is pictured in the living-room of its fortunate owner—as are, for example, the Pleyel

⁹ REP 48 (November 1927): 401.

¹⁰ REP 1 (October 1923): 5.

Piano in Louis XVI style, decorated by Huillard¹¹ and the “Auto-Pleyela” in Louis XV style, also decorated by Huillard.¹²

In addition to promoting the Pleyel Firm, the journal advertised the offerings of music publishers: at the beginning of each issue a page contains advertisements for the publications of music publishers, including Max Eschig & Co.; A. Durand and Son; Rouart, Lerolle & Co.; Maurice Senart Editions; Ricordi; Establishments Jouffroy and Rochefort; Roudanez Editions, etc. In the back of issues there is often an advertisement for the violin makers Jérôme Thibouville-Lamy & Co. Finally, the journal was also associated with the most prestigious art galleries, the exhibitions of which were regularly announced in the “Exhibitions” section.

The journal’s first pages contain the “Sommaire” and musical advertisements. Illustrations follow: a page titled “Éphémérides d’un Almanach du Second Empire (1869)” reproduces a different engraving each month, dealing with the arts in general. Thus “An Orphéon session”¹³ is followed by “Sainte Cécile,” “The Theater,” “Serenade,” “The Masked Ball,” “Concerts,” “Celebration in the Fields,” “In the Meadows,” “Café Concert,” “The Harvesters,” “Concert on the Water” and “Waking Up.”¹⁴ With number 39 (December 1926), the title is changed to “Éphémérides musicales” and other engravings are included each month. With number 17 (February 1925), a section entitled “La musique anecdotique” signed by Henriot¹⁵ incorporates a number of sketches by the caricaturist of the same name and short articles of an anecdotal or humoristic nature. In December 1926, this section is renamed “Le mois musical.” Still with Henriot as illustrator it presents humoristic sketches on various subjects.

Generally, three or four articles follow in a two-column format. Beginning with number 2 (November 1923) and continuing thereafter, new sections following the articles are introduced; these new sections appear in four columns per page and are printed in smaller font. The last pages present news from the Pleyel factories, set in two columns,¹⁶ advertising for the Pleyela rolls, the *Revue Pleyel* concerts at the Comédie des Champs Élysées, or competitions organized by the journal.

There are two kinds of articles: those self-contained and those constituting a “series.” Those in the first group deal with a wide range of subjects extending historically from music and dance in ancient Greece,¹⁷ to contemporary music, namely the Festival of the International Society of Contemporary Music (I.S.C.M.).¹⁸ Some are historical in nature,

¹¹ REP 13 (October 1924): 31.

¹² REP 26 (April 1926): 31.

¹³ 1 October 1823, then on a monthly basis.

¹⁴ These engravings are systematically reproduced each month until December 1926.

¹⁵ Pseudonym of Henri Maigrot (1857-1933). He became head of the *Charivari* in 1890.

¹⁶ Except for the photographs of prestigious pianos which occupy an entire page.

¹⁷ REP 6 (March 1924): 5-9.

¹⁸ In issues 1 of October 1923: 15; and 23 of August 1925: 28.

for example: “L’Origine du Ballet-Opéra,”¹⁹ “La Romance”²⁰ considered from its origin in the *chanson de geste*, and still others are multidisciplinary. In fact, the *Revue Pleyel* displays interest in other arts and their relationship to music, thus: Rodin and music,²¹ Delacroix and Chopin,²² Heine and Meyerbeer.²³ There are also studies on composers, for example, Glinka,²⁴ Prokofiev²⁵ and on music in various countries: “Musical Life in Yugoslavia” and musical activities in the opera houses of Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana.²⁶ Moreover, in keeping with its decision to reach out to other artistic forms, the journal includes a few articles on topics such as the furnishings of transatlantic steamers,²⁷ decors by Léon Bakst and Utrillo,²⁸ and urban architecture in Morocco.²⁹

Among the series, some deal with composers (Carl Tausig³⁰ or the Scarlatti³¹), a singer (Rosalie Levasseur³²), music in a given nation (Russia)³³ or the patronage of Mr. de La Pouplinière.³⁴ Moreover, the journal published letters of composers; for example, on the occasion of the centenary of his death in 1926,³⁵ the journal published selections of letters written by Weber, and letters Mozart wrote to his father, during the trip Mozart undertook with his mother.³⁶ There are also letters sent to the journal by several composers gathered under the title “Les projets des maîtres de la musique.”³⁷ In these one learns about the latest creations of composers or their works in progress. Relating interesting news of the day, one follows Prokofiev’s progress in composing his opera *L’Ange flamboyant*³⁸ and also Claude Laparra writing about the revival of his *Joueur de viole* at the Opéra-Comique.³⁹

¹⁹ REP 4 (January 1924): 5-9.

²⁰ REP 7 (April 1924): 5-11.

²¹ REP 25 (March 1925): 8-10.

²² REP 17 (February 1925): 12-14; 18 (March 1925): 11-14; and 21 (June 1925): 11-12.

²³ REP 20 (May 1925): 16.

²⁴ REP 9 (June 1924): 11-16; and 25 (October 1925): 12-15.

²⁵ REP 30 (March 1926): 10-13.

²⁶ REP 17 (February 1925): 27.

²⁷ REP 8 (May 1924): 14-19.

²⁸ Respectively REP 22 (July 1925): 25; and 33 (June 1926): 9-10.

²⁹ REP 37 (October 1926): 16-18.

³⁰ REP 39 (December 1926): 80-84; 40 (January 1927): 116-19; and 41 (February 1927): 148-52.

³¹ REP 39 (December 1926): 95-96; and 40 (January 1927): 130-33.

³² REP 15 (December 1924): 5-10; 16 (January 1926): 5-8; 17 (February 1925): 5-8; and 19 (April 1925): 5-8.

³³ REP 38 (November 1926): 49-53; and 39 (December 1926): 87-91.

³⁴ REP 43 (April 1927): 212-16; and 44 (May 1927): 249-54.

³⁵ REP 33 (June 1926): 6.

³⁶ REP 26 (November 1925): 5-7; and 36 (September 1926): 5-7.

³⁷ REP 36 (September 1926): 16-18; and 37 (October 1926): 13-15.

³⁸ The première of which took place on 25 November 1954 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, with Charles Bruck as conductor.

³⁹ Revival in October 1926 of the work created in Salle Favart on 24 December 1925.

There are other sections of particular interest in the *Revue Pleyel*. First, “Les Œuvres nouvelles et la critique” offers a press review of *premières* or revivals; with number 11 (October 1924) its title changes to “La revue des journaux.”⁴⁰ The reviews quoted come mainly from the following dailies:⁴¹ *Comœdia*, *L’Excelsior*, *La Liberté*, *Le Matin*, *L’Éclair*, *Le Figaro*, *L’Écho de Paris*, *Le Gaulois*, *Le Correspondant*, *La Revue musicale* and *La Revue de France*. This important section offers an overview of divergent opinions expressed by different critics, and as such constitutes a contemporary critical forum. Thus, very different works like *Pacific 2.3.1.*, a symphonic poem by Arthur Honegger, and *Le Miroir de Jésus*, a sacred cantata by André Caplet, are reported on by nine and six reviewers respectively. Yet another “Revue des journaux” presents selections from nine articles on Romanian music for the performance of *Actéon*, a symphonic poem, conducted by its composer Alessandresco at the Concerts-Colonne.⁴²

The second section, “Nouvelles et projets” appears in number 3 (December 1923). Its field of study is first limited to France, where a section “Calendrier lyonnais” deals with various cultural and artistic activities: concerts at the Grand-Théâtre, the Grands-Concerts and the Petits-Concerts, cycles of lectures, etc. Gradually this section grows first to cover a few European countries,⁴³ and then to treat up to fifteen. In issue number 27 (December 1925), a new section, “Étranger,”⁴⁴ is added in which the names of countries, in bold characters—Germany, England, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, Spain, the United States, The Netherlands, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Poland, Romania and Russia—introduce reviews of musical activities in their respective institutions. In other issues, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia are also treated. With the exception of those dealing with Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia,⁴⁵ none of the reviews are signed.

Offering an impressive panorama of international musical activities, the “Nouvelles et projets” section treats the activities of opera houses and theatres in Berlin, Bremen, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Düsseldorf, Hanover, London, Brussels, Amsterdam, Budapest, Venice, Milan, Moscow, Geneva, Stockholm, Prague, Cairo, etc.

With issue number 27 (December 1925), and until the end of 1926, a new section “Concerts et récitals” follows “Nouvelles et projets.” Dealing exclusively with the French capital, the new section offers reviews of the Concerts-Colonne, Lamoureux, Padeloup, Koussevitski and Staram, the Concerts du Conservatoire, and a Swiss festival at the Trocadéro and a Russian festival at the Koussevitski Concerts. Thereafter, another section “La critique” deals with the works performed at the Opéra and the Opéra-

⁴⁰A drawing by Hellé featuring a crowd carrying flags with the names of the newspapers introduces this press review. *Le Miroir de Jésus* by André Caplet introduces the critical cycle.

⁴¹ By decreasing order of occurrence.

⁴² REP 12 (September 1924): 23-25.

⁴³ For example, in REP 15 of December 1924, Germany, Belgium, The Netherlands and Switzerland are treated.

⁴⁴A practice continued in the journal. Country names are ordered alphabetically (in French).

⁴⁵ Signed respectively by Fr. Grepl and Lucijan Skerjanc.

Comique, the relationship between Ravel and the theatre, the Russian ballets, etc. As mentioned earlier, the European capitals, their institutions and their orchestras are also treated,⁴⁶ for example, in Brussels (the Théâtre royal de la Monnaie and the Concerts populaires), in Milan (Teatro alla scala), in Rome (the Costanzi Theatre), in Amsterdam (the Concertgebouw), as well as opera houses from Berlin to Belgrade, through Bucharest, Cologne, Dortmund, Dresden, Moscow, Ljubljana, Prague, etc. Among the major centers dealt with in the United States is New York (the Metropolitan Opera and the New York Symphony Orchestra).

An occasional article on jazz and its origins, and film music, complete this rich musical survey. Moreover, the pieces selected for compulsory performance at the Concours du Conservatoire, and the results thereof, are published at the time of these events. Given the important part the piano plays in the *Revue Pleyel*, performances of a number of prestigious contemporary pianists are regularly treated in the journal; among these are Alfred Cortot, Henri Gil-Marchex, Leopold Godowsky, and Prokofiev.⁴⁷

Finally, two other sections “Les Livres” and “Expositions” follow, with the final pages of the journal being dedicated to questions related to the Pleyel firm, e.g., news from the Pleyel workshops as well a list of available Pleyela rolls, announcements of the *Revue Pleyel* concerts⁴⁸ or of its competitions.⁴⁹

Because the *Revue Pleyel* presented short clippings in its press reviews, numerous authors are listed in the Index to this RIPM publication. However, our discussion of contributors includes only those who contributed directly to the journal. Thus, while Adolphe Boschot is cited among the authors in the Index, he is not mentioned below, as his contribution to the *Revue Pleyel* consists of excerpts of texts previously published in the *Écho de Paris*. Moreover, as foreign correspondents did not sign their articles they are not discussed below.

Among the contributors, the name Roland-Manuel—a pseudonym for Alexis Lévy (1891-1966)—dominates. His work is astonishing, huge and diverse. The catalogue of the Music Department at the Bibliothèque Nationale (France) divides his production in the following manner: literary, instrumental, vocal, theatrical works as well as film music. As a music historian, he wrote books on Maurice Ravel,⁵⁰ Érik Satie,⁵¹ Arthur Honegger,⁵² Manuel de Falla⁵³ and edited *History of Music*.⁵⁴ In the *Revue Pleyel*, he signed over fifty

⁴⁶ In “Nouvelles et projets.”

⁴⁷ In addition to those mentioned at the beginning of this text, on page 1.

⁴⁸ At the Comédie des Champs-Élysées.

⁴⁹ The “Concours de la Revue Pleyel” in 1925 and the “Concours de mots croisés” in 1926-27 offered readers a chance to win a Pleyel piano.

⁵⁰ *Maurice Ravel et son œuvre* (Paris, 1914) et *À la gloire de Ravel* (Paris, 1938).

⁵¹ *Érik Satie* (Paris, 1916).

⁵² *Arthur Honegger* (Paris, 1925).

⁵³ *Manuel de Falla* (Paris, 1930).

articles, writing on, for example, Scarlatti, Honegger, Satie, Maurice Delage, André Caplet, Ravel, Milhaud, Germaine Tailleferre, jazz etc. He also contributed regularly to the section “La Critique.”

Music historian and critic, Jean-Gabriel Prod’homme (1871-1956) was President of the French Musicological Society and also Curator of the Conservatory and Opéra Museums. Besides writing numerous biographies (Gluck, Gossec, Paganini, Liszt, Berlioz, Gounod), he translated Wagner’s prose works into French. Prod’homme’s articles in the journal deal with the Paris Opéra, the relationship between the singer Marie Fel and Quentin de la Tour, and Rosalie Levasseur singing Gluck.

Translator of Russian literary giants such as Dostoïevski, Gogol, Tolstoï and Lermontov, Boris de Schloëzer (1881-1969) also wrote on music: a volume on *Igor Stravinsky*,⁵⁵ an *Introduction à Jean-Sébastien Bach*,⁵⁶ and considerations on *Problèmes de la musique moderne*.⁵⁷ For the *Revue Pleyel*, he wrote exclusively on Russian music. Louis Aubert (1877-1969), composer of songs, church music, and the opera *La Forêt bleue* reviewed concerts in Paris for the journal.

Georges J. Rémon was art critic and historian. He is the author of the volumes *Jardins de l’antiquité à nos jours* and *Intérieurs anciens, anglais et français*. For the *Revue Pleyel* he reviewed books and art exhibitions. Founder and conductor of the Orchestre de la Suisse romande, Ernest Ansermet (1883-1969) made the acquaintance of Stravinsky when the composer resided in Switzerland. Ansermet’s articles in the *Revue* deal with the composer and Russian music.

When browsing through the *Revue Pleyel* the wealth and the quality of the illustrations are striking. They consist of medallions or portraits of famous musicians—Rossini,⁵⁸ Moscheles, and Paisiello—and of caricatures and/or “portraits-charges” by Dantan *jeune* of Lablache, Berlioz, Rossini and Liszt.⁵⁹ The *Revue Pleyel* had André Hellé (1871-195?) among its collaborators. He designed wooden toys, wrote and illustrated volumes for children. His charming drawings add a touch of humour to the serious character of the articles. Henri Maigrot (1857-1933), known as Henriot, wrote and illustrated several articles and sketches for the *Revue*, combining play on words with current news.

The Pleyel pianos photographed in the journal show the importance of the *Modèle 3 bis* and of the *Crapaud* of which Gounod was so fond. The piano manufacturer knew how to comply with his customer demands and to make instruments adapted to all circumstances, even a piano for a yacht or for a boat. The firm was proud of its new

⁵⁴ Encyclopédie de la Pléiade (Paris, 1960).

⁵⁵ Paris: C. Aveline, 1929.

⁵⁶ Paris: Gallimard, 1969.

⁵⁷ In collaboration with Maria Scribine, (Paris: Éditions de minuit, 1959).

⁵⁸ REP 23 (August 1925): 12.

⁵⁹ REP 15 (December 1924): 12-13; 16 (January 1925): 15; and 22 (July 1925): 17.

instrument, the mechanical piano or Pleyela, the range of which went from 65 to 88 keys. Although made by a competitive firm, the *Revue* dedicates a few articles to the double keyboard piano by Hungarian Emmanuel Moor, which is related to the piano, the harpsichord and the organ. The list of the Pleyela rolls is regularly updated and occupies an important place among the last pages of the *Revue*.

The *Revue Pleyel* was not only an historical and critical journal, but also one dealing with piano making techniques. It was aimed at an elite, educated public. The questions asked in its contests for the readers, the “Concours de la Revue Pleyel,” are an indication of this: thorough questions on Greek or Latin sculptures, literary excerpts from various periods, paintings and portions of scores. Its crossword puzzles were equally challenging. The lucky winners really deserved their Pleyel pianos!