

Revue musicale

The *Revue musicale* appeared in Paris from the beginning of February 1827 to 1 November 1835, at which time it merged with the *Gazette musicale de Paris* to form the *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*.¹ It contains fifteen volumes totaling 461 weekly issues which vary in length from twenty-four to thirty-two pages, depending on variants of format and length of supplements. The journal suffered only one interruption, 31 July 1830, a result of political events. The publication is divided into two series: from 8 February 1827 to the end of January 1830 (ten volumes in octavo) and from 6 February 1830 to 20 December 1835 (five volumes in quarto). The first series was published in the middle of the week, on Tuesdays or Wednesdays; the second, on Saturdays from February 1830 to December 1833, and on Sundays from 1834 to its cessation. The first series poses some difficulties with respect to dating: the issues do not have headings and each volume has a continuous pagination. Although only a few issues are dated, it was possible to reconstruct a number of publication dates by referring to the contents of the periodical. All the issues in the second series are dated.

The overall quality of the *Revue musicale* is such that today it is viewed by scholars as a reference work:

The broad content of the *Revue musicale* . . . has formed the outlines of the picture most historians have drawn and continue to draw of this period. The very advent of this journal . . . marks one of the period's most salient characteristics.²

Moreover, the journal's great popularity led Fétis to offer a revised, corrected and augmented edition a decade after the cessation of its publication.³ Arthur Pougin described the importance and the influence of the review in this manner:

Fétis . . . would finally, with his *Revue musicale*, engender a sort of revolution in France, create in that country a veritable musical press, and by his example encourage the creation of a great number of publications . . .

¹During the last two months of 1835, subscribers to the *Revue musicale* received the *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*. In order to complete their subscriptions, the journal was distributed with the original masthead, the *Revue musicale*. The fusion of the two journals is described by François-Joseph Fétis in "Le Fondateur de la *Revue musicale* à ses abonnés," *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* (1 November 1835): 353-54.

²Peter A. Bloom, "A Review of Fétis's *Revue musicale*," *Music in Paris in the Eighteen-Thirties / La Musique à Paris dans les années mil huit cent trente* (Stuyvesant, New York, 1987), p. 56.

³*Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* (17 November 1844): 386. Maurice Schlesinger, ed.

Every artist, every amateur who wished to be informed about musical developments not only in France but also abroad, in whatever areas, could, for the first time, thanks to the *Revue musicale*, be precisely and fully informed about all the facts in such a way as to solicit and retain his attention.⁴

The enterprise seems to have been motivated by numerous requests from the circle of François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871) to publish a periodical entirely devoted to the art of music. France offered at this period no similar publication and the precursors of the *Revue musicale* had long since disappeared. In effect "the *Revue musicale* . . . was the first French music periodical of importance in the nineteenth century."⁵

The *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of Leipzig probably served as a model for the *Revue musicale*; the latter's prospectus announced that it would be edited by a "society of musicians, composers, artists and theoreticians."⁶ Its founder let it be known, some years after cessation of publication, that Castil-Blaze was originally to have been associated with him in the project.⁷ However, Fétis alone assumed the production of the journal.

Fétis directed the *Revue musicale* from 1827 to the spring of 1833 and he contributed most of its contents during the journal's first five years.⁸ His son Édouard (1812-1909) added his contributions in 1831, writing concert and theatrical reviews; he was charged with the management of the family enterprise from the spring of 1833, when his father left Paris for Brussels at the request of Leopold I of Saxe-Coburg. The father's absence from Paris and the son's loss of interest precipitated the discontinuance of the publication on 1 November 1835. After that date, François-Joseph Fétis contributed exclusively to the *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris* and to *Le Temps*, a liberal daily founded in 1829.

Fétis played a seminal role in the musical life of his period as a composer, choir-master, conductor, critic, musicologist, professor and librarian of the École royale de musique de Paris, director of the Brussels Conservatory, instrument collector,

⁴"Notes sur la presse musicale en France," *Encyclopédie de la musique et dictionnaire du Conservatoire*, A. Lavignac and L. de la Laurencie, eds. (Paris, 1931), 2nd part, IV, pp. 3847, 3849.

⁵Imogen Fellinger, "Periodicals," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Stanley Sadie, ed. (London, 1980), 14: 415.

⁶*Revue musicale* (8 February 1827): 1.

⁷"François-Joseph Fétis," *Biographie universelle des musiciens*.

⁸For a selected list of articles attributed to François-Joseph Fétis, see Peter A. Bloom, "François-Joseph Fétis and the *Revue musicale* (1827-1835)" (Ph.D. University of Pennsylvania, 1972), pp. 443-51.

theoretician and concert organizer. This learned man, who attracted both the intense criticism and the admiration of his contemporaries, left an impressive body of writings on music, including *La Musique mise à la portée de tout le monde* (1830) and the *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique* (1834-44). This last work constitutes his best known and probably most important contribution to modern musicology. It remains today a tool highly regarded by scholars. Finally, his numerous didactic, historical and theoretical works, both published and unpublished, his labors on the restoration of Gregorian chant and the translation of the treatises of Tinctoris complete the list of his principal writings.

Fétis founded three music journals, contributed to many others, and wrote *feuilletons* for the daily newspapers *Le Temps* and *Le National* (founded in 1830). His *Journal de musique des théâtres de tous les pays par une société de musiciens et de gens de lettre* (1804), created in collaboration with Roquefort and Delaunaye, failed after 6 numbers, and the *Gazette musicale de la Belgique* (1833-34) appeared after Fétis moved to Brussels in 1833. It is the Belgian counterpart of the *Revue musicale*, differing only in its masthead and the column "Nouvelles de Bruxelles" which replaced "Nouvelles de Paris." After the discontinuance of the *Revue musicale* and until his death, Fétis' principal contribution to the musical press consists of numerous articles written for the *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*.

Each issue of the *Revue musicale* is divided into two parts. The first is composed of independent articles and literary and analytical columns. The journal begins either with an historical or scientific essay, a biographical notice or obituary, or with the heading "Variétés" which groups a series of articles on news subjects, anecdotes and other light and diverting topics. This is followed by the headings "Littérature musicale" or "Publications classiques, élémentaires et étrangères" which group together reviews of brochures, books, methods, pamphlets or periodicals. Often accompanied by music examples or complete pieces, analyses of published musical works appear under "Bulletin d'analyse." Finally, this part often concludes with the heading "Correspondance," which contains the greater part of the journal's numerous polemical writings as well as exchanges of all sorts between commentators external to the *Revue's* editorial staff. The subjects treated vary considerably; however, theoretical questions predominate here.

The second part of the *Revue musicale* is composed of three columns: "Nouvelles de Paris," "Nouvelles étrangères et des départements" and "Annonces" or "Bulletin d'annonces." The length of this part varies according to the artistic season.

"Nouvelles de Paris" offers an impressive chronicle of the artistic activity of the city and its immediate surroundings. Accounts of concerts, of theatrical productions and performances of all sorts appear here, as does information of a general nature, concerning, for example, the movements of touring artists, legal and

administrative affairs of the theaters and the Conservatory, notes on literary and artistic property, obituaries, and announcements and programs of upcoming performances.

"Nouvelles étrangères" bears witness to the editor's interest in musical performances outside France. Here are found details concerning productions of the principal theaters, reviews of opera premières, of ballets and instrumental works, the composition of operatic troupes as well as the touring activities of singers and virtuosos. Germany, the Austrian Empire, England and Italy are in the foreground and the column draws its information from their respective periodicals: the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of Leipzig, the *Berliner allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, and *Caecilia* of Mainz; the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung und Unterhaltungsblatt für Freunde der Kunst, Literatur und des geselligen Lebens* of Vienna; the *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* and the *Harmonicon* of London; *I Teatri* and *Il Censore universale dei teatri* of Milan.

"Nouvelles des départements" are of a general nature. Fétis extols artistic decentralization and depicts the musical life of the provinces in a manner that encourages its development. He gives details on the activities of philharmonic societies, music schools and theaters of secondary centers; the cities of Bordeaux, Douai, Lille, Marseilles and Strasbourg receive attention in accordance with the vitality of their theatres' activities.

Advertising does not occupy a large place in the *Revue musicale*. Most of the time it consists of lists of works indicating publishers and prices. They are grouped under the headings "Annonces" and "Bulletin d'annonces."

The *Revue musicale* is distinguished from other contemporary music periodicals because it was written in large part by a single author, François-Joseph Fétis. He is responsible for the great majority of the feature articles appearing in the *Revue* between 1827 and 1835. The other articles, frequently smaller in scale, the concert and opera reviews, as well as the regular columns, are often accompanied by complete or abridged signatures; however, most are unsigned.

The research of Peter A. Bloom has led to the identification of some of the journal's collaborators: Adolphe Adam, Albert Sowinsky, Stéphen de la Madeleine, Paulin Richard, Juste Adrien de La Fage, Gottfried Engelbert Anders, Félix Danjou, Jacques-Auguste Delaire, François Stœpel, François-Louis Perne, Édouard Monnais and François Berton.⁹ The articles devoted to these contributors in the *Biographie universelle des musiciens* directly or indirectly allude to their collaboration.

⁹"François-Joseph Fétis and the *Revue musicale* (1827-1835)," pp. 73-74.

The *Revue musicale* has been the object of several studies, foremost among which are those by Bloom,¹⁰ Wangermée¹¹ and Pougin.¹² Fétis also expressed himself on many occasions about his journal.¹³ Finally, contemporary music journals furnish a mine of information as to the status and importance of the *Revue musicale* in the musical world of the nineteenth century.

A microfilm copy of the *Revue musicale* preserved in the Lenox Collection in the Music Division of the New York Public Library was used to prepare these volumes.

¹⁰“François-Joseph Fétis and the *Revue musicale* (1827-1835)” and “A Review of Fétis’s *Revue musicale*” in *Music in Paris in the Eighteen-Thirties / La Musique à Paris dans les années mil huit cent trente*, pp. 55-79.

¹¹*François-Joseph Fétis: musicologue et compositeur* (Bruxelles, 1951).

¹²“Notes sur la presse musicale en France” in *Encyclopédie de la musique et dictionnaire du Conservatoire*.

¹³See notably the prospectuses published in the *Revue musicale*, as well as the *Biographie universelle des musiciens* and the series “Mon testament musical” in the *Revue et gazette musicale de Paris*.