

On the centenary of the composer's birth,

STEPHEN MILLER

discusses

The Band Compositions of Darius Milhaud

Darius Milhaud was born in Provence, France in 1892 and died in Geneva, Switzerland in 1974. He was initially a violinist and pianist before turning to composition and conducting. Early in his career he acted as secretary to Paul Claudel and accompanied the French diplomat when he was appointed ambassador to Brazil from 1916 to 1918. This exposure to South American music was a significant influence on some of the early works.

Returning in 1918, Milhaud became involved in the musical avant garde of Paris and a member of 'Les Six' which also included Francis Poulenc, Germaine Tailleferre, Georges Auric, Louis Durey and Arthur Honegger. Just before the German occupation of 1940, he sought refuge in the United States and, with the help of Pierre Monteux, became Chair of Composition at Mills College in Oakland, California, until his return to France in 1947. He subsequently divided his professional work between a professorship of composition at the Paris Conservatory with teaching sabbaticals in the US at Mills College, Aspen (Tanglewood) and the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara.

Milhaud wrote over 440 compositions including symphonies, concertos, operas, ballets, string quartets, songs and many chamber works for diverse instrumentations. He also composed for films, theatre, radio and television, appearing as conductor of his own music and as piano soloist, recording with major orchestras in the United States and Europe, a huge level of activity. His music was firmly grounded in neo-classic, 20th century style and, with rare exceptions, was a tonal composer. However, he deliberately used diatonic ideas which clashed and contradicted in a manner which he felt provided a greater sweetness in soft passages and greater violence in loud ones.

Polytonality

About Milhaud's personal style of polytonality, Paul Collaer stated that his

feeling was the departure point for all composition, and not a preconceived theoretical system, with language and forms varying according to the composer's feeling and the nature of the expression corresponding to it. It allowed him to enlarge or diminish the nature of sound, to pass from a simple tonality to the superimposition of several tonalities, according to his expressive needs.

One important factor which makes Milhaud's compositions highly attractive and accessible, despite the sometimes complex polytonality, is the inherent melodic quality of his style. In addition, many of his works are based on folk tunes and other pre-existing material, as well as popular dance rhythms. He delighted in 'refurbishing old music in present day garb.'

The Band Compositions

Milhaud liked bands and the sound of them and had numerous professional contacts with Desire Dondeyene, conductor of the Paris police band. His four compositions for band were composed in 1936, 1944, 1945 and 1951 when he was already an established composer. The first and last were composed in Paris for professional military bands; the middle two at Mills College and in New York City, conceived for the American educational band market but not suffering in quality because of that; both were premiered by the Goldman Band. He enjoyed his associations with American youth and had a great sense of dedication and gratitude to the United States for its openness and hospitality to him.

Introduction et Marche Funebre, op 153 (*Chant du Monde/Theodore Presser*) is for a very large band of 2 flutes, 2 piccolos, 3 oboes, E flat clarinet, 5 B flat clarinets, 2 bassoons, contra bassoon, 2 alto, 2 tenor and a baritone saxophones, 5 French horns, 4 trumpets, 4 trombones, 1 tuba, percussion, 2 contra basses and an optional speaking chorus. It was written in Paris in 1936 and was one of seven commissions to eminent French composers to write music for military band for

a grand patriotic pageant. His piece was the Finale to the first act of Romain Rolland's *Quatorze Juliett* and was his first piece for band, meeting with a great deal of popular enthusiasm. It was later expanded for orchestra and frequently performed after the war.

Eight years passed before his next composition for full band although, during this time, he wrote a number of pieces for woodwind. The *Fanfare de la Liberte* op. 235 for 22 winds, timpani, percussion and contrabass was a commission from the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. In 1940, the United States adopted Milhaud as its very own French composer and at least 70 compositions were commissioned from him by American musicians and institutions.

The Leeds Music Company commissioned an easy piece suitable for school band which resulted in a folk song suite presenting the music of respective French provinces in the order that they were liberated by the Allied armies. The resulting form is that of a central *vivo* surrounded by *lentos* and *animatos*, the kind of structural symmetry Milhaud loved to employ. The suite was, of course, the *Suite Francais* (MCA Music/Theodore Presser), probably the best known and most often performed of his output for band. Its instrumentation is for American concert band: piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, E flat clarinet, 3 B flat clarinets, alto clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 alto, tenor, baritone and bass saxophones, 4 horns, 3 cornets, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, baritone, tuba contra bass, timpani and percussion. The duration is 16 minutes being composed in 1944 at Mills College and dedicated to his wife Madeline. Its premier was by the Goldman Band on 13 June 1945 in New York City, the composer later transcribing the work for orchestra which he often did because he had more opportunities to conduct orchestras than bands.

After the premier of *Suite Francais*, G. Schirmer Inc. commissioned Milhaud to write another piece for the educational



Four of 'Les Six' - Darius Milhaud (seated) with (l to r) Louis Durey, Francis Poulenc and Germaine Tailleferre.

market. *Deux marches* op 260, a six-minute piece dedicated to the memory of the American servicemen who lost their lives in the attack on Pearl Harbor, has two movements entitled *In Memoriam* and *Gloria Victoribus*. The first is like a funeral procession somewhat in the style of the first section of the *Introduction et Marche Funebre* and contains some of Milhaud's most sublime writing for band, reminiscent perhaps of the *Alsace-Lorraine* movement of *Suite Francais*. The second is in a brisk march style, tuneful and happy. The instrumentation is similar to *Suite Francais* except for parts for only one each flute and bassoon and no bass saxophone or bass clarinet. Curiously, the alto clarinet, tenor and baritone saxophones do not appear in the score but parts are indeed provided. It was written in New York and at Mills College in 1945 and premiered by the Goldman Band in New York in 1946. It is currently out of print but available on rental from the publisher, with steps now being taken to have it republished. Copies may exist in older American college or military band libraries; I am not aware of its availability in Europe.

In 1947, Milhaud returned to France to teach at the Paris Conservatory but regularly worked in the United States as well. Before his next major composition for band, he wrote, at Mills College, three works which employed the significant sonorities of wind instruments: *Le Chateau de Feu*, *Concertino d'Automne* and *Concertino d'Ete*. In these it is plain to see both the influence of American life on his compositions for winds as well as the influence of Milhaud on American writing for bands.

In 1951, he was commissioned by the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York to write a composition for band to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Academy. He visited the Academy to hear the West Point Band and determine the instrumentation - his normal procedure because he felt the size, instrumentation and ability level varied so much between bands. He was quite impressed with the musicianship and, having forgotten the occasion, was surprised when the band played 'Happy Birthday' for him.

The *West Point Suite* op. 313 has three movements - *Introduction*, *Recitativ* and *Fanfare*. The instrumentation is more orientated towards the brass sonorities than in his previous band works being for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, E flat clarinet, 4 B flat clarinets, alto clarinet, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, soprano, alto, tenor and baritone saxophones, 4 cornets, 2 trumpets, 2 flugel horns, 4 French horns, 3 trombones, 2 baritones, 2 tubas, 2 contra basses, timpani and percussion. The duration is eight minutes. It was composed in Paris and premiered by the West Point Academy Band at Carnegie Hall, New York on 5

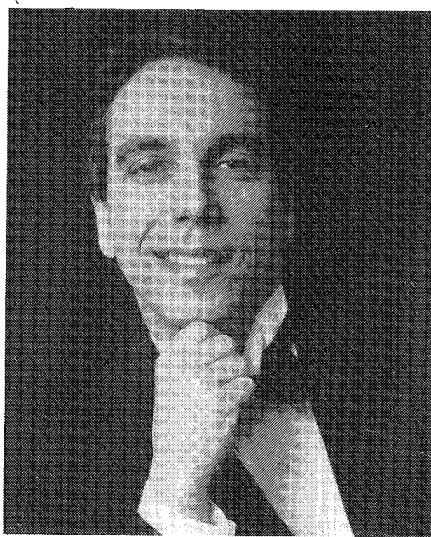
January 1952 being published by Associated Music Publishers and is presently available on rental from Schirmer. The first movement is in fact a re-orchestration of the *Fanfare de la Liberte* for symphonic wind ensemble but creating a significantly different impression, similar to but more striking than the differences in timbre between the two versions of Stravinsky's *Symphonies D'Instruments a Vent*.

Melody

In closing, I would like to present a quote of Milhaud's which summarizes his view of the compositional process:

I have no aesthetic, philosophy or theory of composition. I like writing music. I always do it with love, for otherwise I would not do it at all. And I have always made a point of accepting any work of whatever kind. I have my preferred genres but a composer must do EVERYTHING with dedication and with all the contemporary technical possibilities at his disposal so that, after a life of toil, he may hope to see works remain whose melodic line may stay in the memory, for only melody, the sole living element of music, enables a work to last.

Photo: Dan Milner



Dr Stephen W. Miller is Music Curriculum Advisor in the Springfield School District, Springfield, Missouri, USA having been a trombonist and conductor with many and varied combinations and famous artists. He has various articles, presentations and publications to his credit and, in his studies of the work of Darius Milhaud, has had several close discussions with the composer's widow, Madame Madeline Milhaud. This article is a digest of a talk with musical illustrations given by Dr Miller on a number of occasions, the latest being at the CBDNA South West Division Conference at the University of Arkansas in February 1992. Anyone wishing to explore the subject more deeply is invited to write to: The Darius Milhaud Society, 15715 Chadbourne Road, Cleveland, OH 44120, USA.

The Brand Itinerary



Geoffrey Brand in the Promised Land

As a young soldier and member of a British Army band I had visited Palestine in 1946. Now, in 1991, I was invited to Israel to work for MATAN, an Arts and Culture Project for Youth. On arrival Rafi Primo, Music Director of Matan, well known to WASBE and BASBWE members, took me immediately into his home, where I was welcomed warmly. I knew I was going to work amongst friends. Two weeks later I had shared wonderful experiences, musical and otherwise, which have added new friends, new colleagues. This is the special joy which all who take part in international music making recognise and engage in as a contribution to world-wide understanding without politics!

MATAN organises camps for young Israeli musicians, together with courses in dance and other cultural interests. In December 1991 around 350 were taking part. The dates coincided with the Festival of Chanukah which dates back to 168 BC, the days of Judas Maccabaeus. Legend has it that the only pure oil found in the Temple, sufficient for one day, burned for eight days. Since then during the Festival of Chanukah one candle is lit daily and added to the 8-branched candelabrum - the Chanukiyah. All students and tutors came together for this and I was able to share and enjoy the experience.

Prior to the start of the Matan Camp I was to work in Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee. Here I met dedication and enthusiasm, personified in Motti Eines, Director of Tiberias Music Centre. With civic backing - the Mayor of Tiberias is a regular visitor at the Music Centre and a constant champion of civic financial support - there is every likelihood that future plans for expansion which Motti Eines skilfully nurtures and pursues will come to fruition. In addition to his administrative duties, Moti conducts the Wind Orchestra; he has gathered a splendid team of teachers, all fired by their Director's zeal and energy.

My two day visit was exhilarating, working with lively students keen to learn. Remember Tiberias Music Centre; it will grow and its work become more widely appreciated, inside and beyond Israel. My own schedule demanded that I move