

Hommage à la fraîcheur. Tribute to the Group of Six.

“[...] they went down into the street, turned their backs on the false sublime, the conventions of the theater, they repudiated aestheticism, renounced isolation, loved life, all life, even in its most humble of manifestations (1).”

Arthur Honegger, Francis Poulenc, Darius Milhaud, Germaine Tailleferre, Louis Durey and Georges Auric are the 6 composers that the critic Henri Collet identified in an article (2) as the *Group des Six*. They were all at the peak of their youth when they met in Paris and participated alongside many other artists in an intellectual emulation that inspired a storm of musical ideas under an umbrella of friendship. Between 1911, when Honegger and Milhaud first meet and 1920, the year they publish their first joint journal: *Le Coq* and 1921, the year where they create their first joint artwork: *Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel*, the six composers continuously impose on their music an aesthetic of simplification and purification after the aesthetics of subtlety and complexity of the impressionist movement.

Composer Erik Satie and writer and illustrator Jean Cocteau are the mentors for these *new youth*. Satie's lively spirit and artistic vision affects greatly this new generation of composers. Satie was a good friend of composer Claude Debussy and had also a close friendship with colleague Maurice Ravel. “Ravel, like Satie, had this non-conformist and fierce independence that kept him within the boundaries of honour and decorum [...] that made him so secretive and so baffling (3).”

The *Suite Anglaise* (1942) composed by Darius Milhaud is the first piece from one of the *Group of Six* to have been interpreted by Duo Accordiano. It is also the only piece on this disk that was not arranged by the members themselves. Originally a concerto for harmonica and orchestra, this piece shows the popular inspiration that inspired Darius Milhaud and that Mogens Ellegaard arranged with finesse for the accordion.

The three musical interludes from Francis Poulenc are taken from his secular cantata *Le Bal masqué* (1932). Poulenc said of this cantata that it was the only way he had found to pay tribute to the Parisian suburb's atmosphere that was so dear to him. He went on to explain that the colour of this piece underscores the emphatic, the ridiculous, the terrifying and the pitiful. It depicts the atmosphere of his childhood's crime chromolithographs published in the *Petit Parisien* Sunday edition (4).

Trois morceaux en forme de poire (1903) from Erik Satie has a tongue and cheek title. It was a direct response to his critics who found that his compositions lacked in form. Perhaps also a direct reaction to the success of fellow composer Claude Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*. After the hit of *Pelléas*, Satie wrote in his notes: “Nothing left to do in this direction. One must look elsewhere, if not I am lost.” Satie was at a loss of inspiration, took some old sketches and transformed them into a masterpiece (5).

If Satie is the main influencer of the *Group of Six*, Maurice Ravel is also central to their music. Mainly when it comes to their music reviews. In their journal *Le Coq* you can read: “Ravel himself refuses the Legion of Honour, but all of his music accepts it” or “[...] Ravel used the *machine to make wind*. One should not be astonished if we would have preferred on a nice day a *machine to dissipate the wind* (7).” *Five O'Clock (foxtrot)* (1924) is from the second lyric fantasy *L'enfant et les sortilèges*. This piece is far from the harmonic squalls that was so criticized by the *Group of Six*.

Germaine Tailleferre was the only woman in the group. Satie said of her that she was his musical daughter. Jean Cocteau described her piece *Jeux de plein air* (1917) as: "Countryside. Open window. We rake. The scales go up and down. It is a holiday's homework (7)..." In *Fandango* (1920), the rhythmic ostinato is interspersed by short breaths. The sustained popular harmonics contrast with the melodic line. Offset counterpoint's are in dissonance with one another. It is an ingenious composition style that brings lightness and a touch of irony to the piece.

At 14, Georges Auric already displays a unique intellectual predisposition and is contributing to the music critiques of his time. This brought him to know Eric Satie at a very young age. His *Valse* (1949) composed for two pianos *narrowly avoids banality* thanks to his deep inspiration. He explains the source of his inspiration to José Bruyr of *L'Écran des musiciens* as such: "In all music, one must be able to go beyond the immediate joy and the first charm, to go to the touching and always changing sound barrier. To discover a thought in the immaterial substance and to profit, as the enchanters and fairies do, in the wonderful world of fairytales. To not sacrifice one's intellect, but to note that there is much more to music than just the satisfaction of the ear (1)."

Arthur Honneger, the only Swiss of the group, studied violin in Zurich before going on to the Conservatoire de Paris to study composition. He was very influenced at the beginning by Claude Debussy. He composed *Rapsodie* (1917) for two flutes, clarinet and piano. This was the same year where Germaine Tailleferre composed her *Jeux de plein air*. For the common masterpiece of the *Group of Six*, the ballet *Les Mariés de la tour Eiffel*, he composed the *Marche funèbre* (1921).

1. Jean Roy, le Groupe des Six, Ed. Seuil, 1994
2. Henri Collet, Revue Comoedia, 1917
3. Vladimir Jankélévitch, Ravel, Ed. Seuil, 1995
4. Francis Poulenc, Journal de mes mélodies, Ed. Cicero, 1993
5. Romaric Gergorin, Erik Satie, Actes Sud/Classica, 2016
6. Revue Commune, Le Coq, 1920
7. Jean Cocteau, Ecrits sur la musique, Ed. J.Vrin, 2016

Duo Accordiano

Founded in 2013, Duo Accordiano made its name largely due to its continuous search of a new Repertoire for this instrumentation. Their artistic vision is driven by the desire to elevate the Accordion to the "noblesse" of the Piano and showcase its complementary musical abilities.

The Duo Accordiano's first CD *Impressions Nouvelles* is now proudly followed by their second CD. This second disk is the fruit of long and arduous work by both members. Together they collaborated with the transcribing and arranging of all the pieces. Bojana Antovic, the pianist, did the graphics while Julien Paillard, the accordionist, wrote the texts.