

ROUTLEDGE REVIVALS

**Rhythmic and Contrapuntal  
Structures in the Music of  
Arthur Honegger**

**Keith Waters**



RHYTHMIC AND CONTRAPUNTAL STRUCTURES  
IN THE MUSIC OF ARTHUR HONEGGER

*for Gene*

# Rhythmic and Contrapuntal Structures in the Music of Arthur Honegger

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# Preface

This book examines fundamental principles of musical organization in the music of Arthur Honegger. These principles are based upon systematic rhythmic and contrapuntal strategies, illuminated through an examination of Honegger's compositions and compositional sketches. While techniques of pitch organization are diverse in the compositions of Honegger, the strategies of rhythm and counterpoint provide an underlying source of compositional unity.

The initial chapter provides a brief historical summary of the composer's career and examines the significant compositional influences upon Honegger. A summary of the analytically-based secondary literature focuses upon issues of architectural symmetry and harmonic progression. A concluding review of Honegger's own prose writings examines a number of the composer's aesthetic positions.

The second and third chapters establish analytical methods for examining rhythmic and contrapuntal organization in Honegger's music. Chapter two discusses rhythmic and metric organization in several compositions, highlighting methods of rhythmic conflict, and shows how these same conflicts are expressed across different levels of rhythmic structure. The discussion attempts to extend and refine current theories of rhythmic (or "metrical") consonance and dissonance. Contrapuntal strategies are expressed through techniques of inversional symmetry, considered here in terms of contour symmetry, generic interval symmetry, and specific interval symmetry: this provides the focus of Chapter three. In addition to controlling outer-voice simultaneities, these and other symmetries, such as that of the interval cycle, govern longer-range linear spans.

Chapters four and five provide extended analyses of two orchestral works. *Mouvement symphonique no. 2 (Rugby)* establishes a series of correspondences based upon pitch material, rhythmic groupings, and rhythmic conflicts. Rhythmic conflicts are expressed at different levels of rhythmic and metric structure, and are stated in the domain of pitch. The analysis of the first two movements of *Symphonie pour cordes* is supplemented by the composer's sketches. The final chapter suggests avenues for future inquiry in the domain of pitch organization of the music of Honegger, in coordination with current

analytical approaches for the tonally-centric music of Stravinsky, Bartók, and Hindemith.

\* \* \*

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I would also like to acknowledge the support of the Eastman School of Music and its Department of Music Theory, which was chaired by Marie Rolf during my graduate studies there. The Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, Switzerland provided me with a generous grant to study Arthur Honegger’s compositional and contrapuntal sketches during the summer of 1994. The Foundation’s Robert Piencikowski was unstinting in his help, and he offered many trenchant insights into twentieth-century French music and culture. Felix Meyer, the current director of the Sacher Foundation, suggested a number of fruitful avenues for inquiry. In addition, the *Association d’Arthur Honegger* and its director Annie Neuberger have provided an important focal point for research into Honegger’s music. I would like to thank Editions Salabert and Carl Fischer for generously granting reprint permission for many of the musical examples used throughout the book. I would also like to thank Ashgate Publishing and Rachel Lynch for their interest in this project. Ruth Peters, Celia Hoare, and Sarah Charters of Ashgate cheerfully offered a good deal of editorial advice. Finally, this book owes a great deal to the unending support and sanity of Gene Hayworth.

*Denver, Colorado*

## Chapter 1

# Background

### Introduction

Honegger has vanished; with him our youth's initiation to contemporary music is obliterated. *Antigone*, *Horace Victorieux*, the *Symphonie pour cordes*: it is from there that we began a journey rich in surprises. Let us thank Honegger for having given us a taste for adventure.<sup>1</sup>

Pierre Boulez' elegy testifies to the influence that Arthur Honegger (1892-1955) exerted upon contemporary music of the first half of the twentieth century. Boulez identifies the music of Honegger as a signal point of departure for the path undertaken by a newer generation of composers. Other contributors to the 1956 "Hommage à Honegger" issue of *Melos*—Dallapiccola, Fortner, Henze, Messiaen, and others—discussed works most closely associated with the composer, works such as *Le Roi David*, *Mouvement symphonique (Pacific 231)*, and *Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher*, and they similarly acknowledged the influence of the recently deceased composer upon their own generation. Most singled out Honegger's ability to merge innovation and tradition, his contributions to both dramatic and symphonic music, and his stature as humanist and intellectual. The entries reflect Honegger's prestige as a composer at mid-century.

By the time of Honegger's death in 1955, he had written over 200 compositions. His output included five symphonies, over twenty ballet scores, chamber music, more than forty film scores, operas and operettas, music for voice, music for piano, as well as oratorios and other orchestral music. Although well-known as a member of the group of French composers *Les Six* in the early 1920s, Honegger composed most of his significant and best-known works after the group dissolved around the mid-1920s. His compositions incorporated elements of atonality, tonality, extended tonality, and polytonality, at times all within a single composition. Honegger's own credo combined accessibility with compositional rigor:

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<sup>1</sup> "Honegger disparaît; avec lui s'efface l'initiation de notre jeunesse à la musique contemporaine ... *Antigone*, *Horace Victorieux*, la *Symphonie pour cordes*, c'est par là que nous avons commencé un périple fertile en surprises. Qu'Honegger soit remercié de nous avoir donné le goût de l'aventure." Pierre Boulez, Obituary from "Hommage à Honegger," *Melos* (January 1956): 4.

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My inclination and my effort have always been to write music which would be comprehensible to the great mass of listeners and at the same time sufficiently free of banality to interest genuine music lovers ... I have wanted to touch the two publics: the technicians and the multitude.<sup>2</sup>

Honegger's earliest works show the strong influence of other composers: the *Sonate pour violon et piano en ré mineur* (1912)<sup>3</sup> makes use of the cyclic form and the late-Romantic harmonic language of César Franck, while the *Prélude pour Aglavaine et Sélysette* (1917) and the *Rhapsodie* (1917) owe much to the harmonic language of Claude Debussy. Honegger's seven years of study at the Conservatoire in Paris (1911-1918)—which included classes with Charles-Marie Widor, Vincent d'Indy, and seven years of counterpoint study with André Gedalge—shifted the young composer's attention to chamber music, musical architecture (especially the use of sonata form), and counterpoint. Many of the works composed up to 1920 reflect these compositional preoccupations, including the String Quartet (1917), two Violin Sonatas (1918 and 1919), a Viola Sonata (1920), a Cello Sonata (1920), and a Sonatina for Two Violins (1920). In these compositions the harmonic language of late-Romanticism and Impressionism gives way to extended tonality and pitch centricity, and a number of the movements include fugal and imitative passages.

The works of the twenties veered into several different avenues. Some of the compositions were written in a lighter and more accessible idiom, at times reflecting the spirit of *Les Six*, such as the piano works *Sept pièces brèves* (1920), *Le Cahier romand* (1923), the *Concertino* for piano and orchestra (1924), and the Cello Concerto (1929). The incidental music for the play *Le Roi David* (1921) was turned into an oratorio two years later and launched Honegger's international career. In contrast, several works moved towards free atonality, including the orchestral work *Horace Victorieux* (1921) and the opera *Antigone* (1927). Honegger's best-known work, *Mouvement symphonique (Pacific 231)* (1923), was the first of three single-movement orchestral works that he termed *Mouvements symphoniques*. Rhythm plays a fundamental formal and structural role in these three works, which emerge from the tradition of the symphonic poem.

Owing to a decline in the number of commissions for concert works in the 1930s, Honegger turned towards more commercial endeavors. He composed twenty-four film scores, in addition to incidental music, radio plays, light cabaret songs, and several anthems for the leftist Popular Front political coalition. He

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<sup>2</sup> Arthur Honegger, *I Am a Composer*, trans. by Wilson O. Clough in collaboration with Allan Arthur Willman (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), 92, 94. Originally published as *Je suis compositeur* (Paris: Editions du Conquistador, 1951).

<sup>3</sup> Unpublished, housed at the Paul Sacher Stiftung.

reached the second plateau of his career in the collaboration with poet Paul Claudel for the oratorio *Jeanne d'Arc au bûcher* (1935), which premiered in 1938.

In contrast to his facility in composing incidental music and film scores, Honegger acknowledged the difficulty and challenge of symphonic writing:

As far as I am concerned, symphonic works give me much trouble: they demand an effort at sustained reflection. On the contrary, as soon as I can refer to a literary or visual pretext, my work becomes much easier.<sup>4</sup>

Although the first symphony was written in 1929, the last four were not written until after 1940. Some commentators consider these final four symphonies, created during the last fifteen years of the composer's life, to represent the summit of his output. One writer suggests, "It would be no exaggeration to say that Honegger, in his five symphonies, reveals the most substantial and human side of his inspiration—the very essence of his thought and art."<sup>5</sup> Significant works written in the final years of his life include the *Concerto da camera* (1948), the Fifth Symphony (*Di tre re*, 1950), and *Une cantata de Noël* (A Christmas Cantata, 1953).

### Sources and Influences

Honegger stood at the confluence of various currents of musical tradition. As a music student he absorbed a wide array of musical styles that shaped his compositional approach. On the one hand, his earliest training at the Conservatory in Zürich between 1909-11 was steeped in the Germanic tradition. Geoffrey Spratt underlines the importance of these studies:

The influence of this period, heavily biased towards a study of composition involving analysis of music by the Classical masters and the works of Wagner, R. Strauss and Reger, cannot be overstressed when the elements of Honegger's personal musical language are examined—at the very least they represent a framework that always distinguishes Honegger from the purely French school of composers.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Honegger, *Composer*, 80-81.

<sup>5</sup> Georges Favre, *Musiciens français contemporains*, vol. 2 (Paris: Durand, 1956), 77. Quoted and translated in Geoffrey Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1987), 368.

<sup>6</sup> Geoffrey Spratt, *The Music of Arthur Honegger* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1987), 2.

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On the other hand, recent biographical evidence indicates a youthful and enthusiastic shift in musical allegiance after Honegger left the Conservatory in Zürich and immersed himself in Parisian musical culture upon entering the Conservatoire in Paris in 1911. In a letter to his parents in 1915, he emphasized this aesthetic change:

... my musical sympathies with the new French school are growing daily. There's no doubting that, for the first time, France is currently at the head of musical developments. I got to know and love Reger and Strauss while I was in Switzerland, and I continue to love them, but I realized that composers like Debussy, Dukas, d'Indy, Florent Schmitt, and others, were newer and more original, and above all contained more feeling than the modern Germans. Strauss's music, considered on its own and apart from its orchestral clothing that is its principal strength (and a strength of genius in that composer), is infinitely less rich in invention than the music of Debussy, for example, and often contains things that are extremely banal and old-fashioned. Reger's music is admirably written, but it often lacks real imagination or emotion, and for that reason constitutes an abuse of technical procedures.<sup>7</sup>

Honegger later acknowledged a détente between the French and German influences, noting that Debussy and Fauré provided a “useful counterbalance” to the classics and Wagner.<sup>8</sup> The influence of Debussy and Fauré is evident in Honegger's harmonic language, especially in the early vocal works that were written during Honegger's student years. These works, such as the *Trois Poèmes de Paul Fort* (1916), and the *Six Poèmes d'Apollinaire* (1915-1917), employ modality, as well as added seventh and ninth chords. Honegger's pronounced emphasis on musical architecture and large multi-movement works owed some debt to Vincent d'Indy, with whom Honegger had studied at the Conservatoire.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to his more immediate German and French predecessors, two earlier composers, Beethoven and Bach, were critical influences. Honegger wrote of his interest in and study of Beethoven sonatas as a youth in Le Havre, and some of his earliest compositional forays were written “quite naïvely in the

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<sup>7</sup> Originally quoted in Harry Halbreich, *Arthur Honegger: Un musicien dans la cité des hommes* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1992), 36-7. Trans. by Roger Nichols in *Arthur Honegger* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1999), 32.

<sup>8</sup> Honegger, *Composer*, 91.

<sup>9</sup> Honegger studied conducting with d'Indy beginning in March 1916. He later described these classes with d'Indy as workshops in which the composition students could hear their works played and could improve on compositional or orchestrational problems. See Halbreich, *Honegger*, trans. Nichols, 35.

style of Beethoven.”<sup>10</sup> Beethoven’s influence is especially apparent in Honegger’s reliance on traditional strategies for thematic development, manipulation, and juxtaposition. These strategies provide a consistent source of musical organization throughout Honegger’s *oeuvre*.

Writing in 1925, Honegger discussed the more pervasive influence of Bach:

But the chief of them, he whom I never cease to take as a model, is old Bach. In him I find all that I wish ... One might just as easily find Bach at the origins of all my works.<sup>11</sup>

Bach’s influence was manifold. A Protestant, Honegger was attracted to the genre of oratorio and to biblical subjects, reflected particularly in his works *Le Roi David* (1921) and *Judith* (1925). Honegger allied himself with Bach’s ethos of composer as religious craftsman. In addition, Honegger overtly modeled his own contrapuntal orientation upon Bach’s.<sup>12</sup>

The influences of Beethoven and Bach consistently supplied Honegger with traditional methods for musical organization: in the case of Beethoven, the commitment to thematic developmental techniques, and in the case of Bach, the use of counterpoint and contrapuntal devices of fugue, canon, stretto, and imitation. Like other twentieth-century neoclassical composers, Honegger often employed these methods independent of common-practice harmonic constraints, instead using a focal pitch-class to articulate a tonal center at formal arrival points.

Finally, three twentieth-century figures formed important influences: Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Bartók. Halbreich’s recent biography discusses the attraction of Arnold Schoenberg for the Conservatoire students Honegger and Milhaud. Serving in the military in Switzerland between 1915 and 1916, Honegger was able to obtain musical scores of Schoenberg unavailable in wartime Paris, including the song cycle *The Book of the Hanging Gardens* (op. 15, 1908).<sup>13</sup> Honegger also attempted to translate Schoenberg’s *Harmonielehre*, a

<sup>10</sup> Arthur Honegger, *Nachklang, Schriften, Dokumente*, ed. by Willi Reich (Zürich: Die Arche, 1957), 9. “All dies war ganz naiv im Stile Beethovens geschrieben, denn in den Klaviersonaten dieses Meisters hatte ich, ehe ich noch Unterricht erhielt, die Grundgesetze der Harmonie entdeckt und verstanden.” Honegger is here referring to his unpublished six sonatas for violin and piano, written in 1908 at the age of sixteen.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted and translated in Kurt von Fischer, “Arthur Honegger,” included in *Essays in Musicology*, trans. by Carl Skoggard and ed. by Tamara S. Evans (New York: The Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York, 1989), 154-155. Originally appeared in “Opinions d’Arthur Honegger,” *Dissonances* II (1925): 84-7.

<sup>12</sup> See the quote p. 3 above. Honegger’s contrapuntal orientation and his contrapuntal studies at the Conservatoire for the focus of Chapter three.

<sup>13</sup> Halbreich, *Honegger*, trans. Nichols, 33.

text that he described as “an extraordinary work and indispensable for the modern composer.”<sup>14</sup> Honegger seems to have studied the implications of Schoenberg’s treatise in quite specific ways. A chord from Honegger’s sketchbook is illustrative of this connection. Example 1.1a shows this chord from the sketchbook, consisting of all twelve pitch classes derived from the vertical combination of three diminished-seventh chords. Example 1.1b is from Figure 339g of Schoenberg’s *Harmonielehre*, taken from the chapter entitled “Chords with six or more notes,”<sup>15</sup> similarly showing a twelve-note chord distributed through the combination of three diminished-seventh chords.

Example 1.1a and b: 12-note Chord in Honegger and Schoenberg

The image displays two musical examples, 1a and 1b, each consisting of a treble and bass staff. Example 1a (Honegger) shows a complex 12-note chord in the treble staff, with notes grouped into three diminished-seventh chords. Example 1b (Schoenberg) shows a similar 12-note chord in the treble staff, also composed of three diminished-seventh chords, with a bass staff showing a few notes below.

1a. Honegger: from sketchbook

1b. Schoenberg: *Harmonielehre*

The use of chromatic completion in a number of Honegger’s works also suggests another link with Schoenberg’s treatise as well as with Schoenberg’s pre-serial atonal compositions.<sup>16</sup> In one analysis, Maillard and Nahoum illustrate Honegger’s strategy of using all twelve pitch classes in both the horizontal and the vertical dimension, and they note the overt—if infrequent—technique of harmonizing a melodic cell with the residual pitches of the chromatic scale.<sup>17</sup>

Example 1.2, from the beginning of the second movement of Honegger’s

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>15</sup> Honegger’s sketch taken from microfilm 185: 325 at the Paul Sacher Foundation. It is not clear what, if any, composition this was intended for. Proximate sketch material suggests entry between 1921–1922. Schoenberg’s chord taken from Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy E. Carter (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 407.

<sup>16</sup> For the music of Schoenberg, Ethan Haimo distinguishes between chromatic completion, in which a pitch class may return before all twelve have sounded, and an aggregate, in which no pitch class may so recur. Ethan Haimo, *Schoenberg’s Serial Odyssey: The Evolution of his Twelve-Tone Method, 1914–1928* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 44, 183.

<sup>17</sup> Jean Maillard and Jacques Nahoum, *Les symphonies d’Arthur Honegger* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1974), 60.

1920 vocal composition *Trois Fragments extraits de "Les Pâques à New York" de Blaise Cendrars*, demonstrates the technique of keeping all twelve pitch classes in circulation. Figure 1.1, below Example 1.2, indicates each of the pitch classes used in each measure. Figure 1.1 shows that by m. 2, any pitch class not stated in a given measure appears in the following measure.

Example 1.2: Mm. 1-9 from *Les Pâques à New York*, ii

The image displays a musical score for Example 1.2, consisting of piano accompaniment and vocal lines. The score is written in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piano part is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic and includes several triplet figures. The vocal line includes the following lyrics:

Faites, — Sei-gneur,  
que mon vi - sage ap - pu - ye dans mes mains y

The score is divided into four systems. The first system shows the piano accompaniment for measures 1-3. The second system shows the vocal line for measures 1-3, with the lyrics "Faites, — Sei-gneur,". The third system shows the piano accompaniment for measures 4-6, with the lyrics "que mon vi - sage ap - pu - ye dans mes mains y". The fourth system shows the piano accompaniment for measures 7-9, with the lyrics "que mon vi - sage ap - pu - ye dans mes mains y".

## Example 1.2 (Continued)

lais — se tom - ber le mas-que d'an- gois- se qui m'e- treint.

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Figure 1.1: Chromatic completion in mvmt. 2 of *Les Pâques à New York*, mm. 1-9 (C = 0, C# = 1 ... Bb = A, B = B)

M. 1:	0							8	9	A			
2:	0	1	2	3				6	7	8	9	A	B
3:	0			3	4	5	6	7	8	9	A		
4:			1	2	3	4			7	8	9	B	
5:	0	2	3	4	5	6			8	9	A		
6:	0	1	2	3	4			6	7	8	9	A	B
7:	0	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	A			
8:	0	1	2	3	4	5	6		8	9	B		
9:	0	1		3	4			6	7		9	A	B

In addition to Schoenberg, Stravinsky plays a significant role in the understanding of Honegger's compositional style, particularly in regard to Honegger's forceful rhythmic language, the use of bitonality, and pitch centricity.

Honegger identified a third pivotal twentieth-century precursor:

The writers on music who deal with this post-Debussy period generally agree in recognizing Schoenberg and Stravinsky as those responsible for the reaction that it has stimulated. Certain writers would even add Erik Satie. To my thinking, it is much more Bartók who, with Schoenberg and Stravinsky, is the true representative of this generation's musical revolution. Less direct, less sparkling than Stravinsky, less dogmatic than Schoenberg, he is, of the three, perhaps

the most profoundly musical, and the one whose development has taken place by means of the most continual and best organized effort.<sup>18</sup>

Musical correspondences between Bartók and Honegger have not been developed significantly in biographical and analytical literature, but extant observations are suggestive. First, Honegger returned to Paris in 1916 with scores of the music of Bartók, in addition to those of Schoenberg. (See footnote 13 above.) Second, Honegger's preoccupation with formal symmetry through reversed recapitulation and *Bogenform* closely mirrors the formal techniques of Bartók. Third, one of Geoffrey Spratt's primary analytical observations is Honegger's penchant for harmonic motion by thirds, especially by minor thirds. This aligns to a certain degree with Ernő Lendvai's axis-system construct for the compositions of Bartók.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, Lendvai and others have called attention to Bartók's use of the golden-section proportion to structure a number of his compositions. Honegger uses the golden-section proportion also in several works, beginning as early as 1917 in his *Le Chant de Nigamon*, and appearing as late as 1950 in one of his final compositions, the third movement from the Symphony no. 5.<sup>20</sup>

### Honegger and *Les Six*

Honegger is perhaps best known for his membership in the group of French composers *Les Six* in the early 1920s. Together with Honegger, *Les Six* consisted of Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, Georges Auric, Germaine Tailleferre, and Louis Durey. The six composers, in loose collaboration with Jean Cocteau and Erik Satie, had already had their works played jointly on concerts since 1918, often billing themselves as *Les Nouveaux jeunes*. The name *Les Six* was derived from two articles by Henri Collet that appeared in the journal *Comoedia* in January 1920 entitled "Un ouvrage de Rimsky et un ouvrage de ... Cocteau: les

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<sup>18</sup> Quoted and translated in von Fischer, "Arthur Honegger," 153. This quote originally appeared in Honegger's introduction written for Serge Moreux, *Béla Bartók, sa vie, ses œuvres, son langage* (Paris: Richard Massé, 1949), 7-9.

<sup>19</sup> See especially Ernő Lendvai, *Béla Bartók: An Analysis of His Music* (London: Kahn and Averill, 1971); and *The Workshop of Bartók and Kodály* (Budapest: Editio Musica, 1983). Geoffrey Spratt's observes Honegger's harmonic practices in his book: see Spratt, *Arthur Honegger*. Some of the problems in determining harmonic areas are discussed later in the chapter.

<sup>20</sup> See Halbreich, *Honegger*, trans. Nichols, 336 and 347 for a discussion. See also Chapter five of this work, where I discuss the use of the golden-section proportion in the second movement of the *Symphonie pour cordes* (Symphony no. 2). In addition to Bartók, another potential source for the use of this proportion may have come about through Honegger's association with poet Guillaume Apollinaire, who was affiliated with the group of cubist painters known as the "Section d'or" in 1912.

Cinq Russes, les Six Français” and “Les Six Français.” The resultant publicity from Collet’s articles, fueled by Jean Cocteau’s vigorous pamphleteering, helped establish a public perception of the six composers as standard-bearers for music that was distinctly French, unpretentiously rooted in popular music sources of the music hall, circus, and cabaret, and characterized by flippancy, levity, deliberate banality, and mordant Gallic wit.<sup>21</sup>

Yet, as the composers themselves insisted, the notion of a monolithic group aesthetic was a vast oversimplification, and their relationship was based upon mutual friendship rather than upon a shared set of musical values. In particular, Honegger’s inclusion in *Les Six* is frequently offered as evidence of the arbitrary nature of their association, given Honegger’s interest in larger musical structures and his affinity for German composers. Less than a year after Collet’s articles had appeared in January 1920, Honegger distanced himself from the perception of *Les Six* largely molded by Cocteau. Posing instead as a traditionalist, formalist, and a champion of absolute music, he declared:

I do not cultivate an admiration for the music of the fairgrounds and music hall, but on the contrary for that of chamber and symphonic music at its most grave and austere ... I attach great importance to musical architecture which I would never like to see sacrificed for literary or pictorial reasons. I also have a perhaps exaggerated tendency to return to polyphonic complexity. My great model is J.S. Bach.<sup>22</sup>

On the surface, Honegger’s comments seem to strongly repudiate several positions associated with *Les Six*, and indicate an aesthetic indebted more to German than to French musical values. Some writers have suggested that the values espoused in these comments drastically set him apart from the other composers of the group and from Cocteau and Satie.<sup>23</sup> Certainly, Honegger’s notion of chamber and symphonic music “at its most grave and austere” contradicts the spirit of levity and frivolity that characterizes many of the

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<sup>21</sup> Cocteau’s published his pamphlet *Le Coq et l’Arequin* in 1918, and four issues of *Le Coq* were released between May-November 1920.

<sup>22</sup> “... je ne cultive pas l’admiration de la Foire et du Music-hall, mais au contraire celle de la musique de chambre et de la musique symphonique dans ce qu’elle a de plus grave et austère... J’attache aussi une grande importance à l’architecture musicale que je ne voudrais jamais voir sacrifiée à des raisons d’ordre littéraire ou pictural. J’ai aussi une tendance peut-être exagérée à rechercher la complexité polyphonique. Mon grand modèle est Jean-Sébastien Bach.” Arthur Honegger, *Ecrits*, textes réunis et annotés par Huguette Calmel (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1992), 34. Portions of this letter to journalist Paul Landormy originally appeared in “MM Honegger et Georges Auric,” *La Victoire* (September 28, 1920): 2.

<sup>23</sup> Regarding Honegger’s 1920 statements quoted above, Halbreich writes, “There is in fact practically nothing in that paragraph, except an admiration for J.S. Bach, to which the other members of *Les Six*, Cocteau, or Satie, would have subscribed.” See Halbreich, *Honegger*, trans. Nichols, 66.

representative works of *Les Six*, especially those by Poulenc, Milhaud, and Auric. In addition, Honegger and Satie were dismissive of each other's music, a hostility sparked in part by the friction between Honegger's musical *gravitas* and Satie's calculated banality. Moreover, Honegger's love of the music of Wagner contradicted the anti-Wagnerian maxims churned out by Cocteau. Honegger and Cocteau carried out an epistolary war in the press in 1922 with Honegger adopting the stance of prickly traditionalist, writing:

... [I]t seems to me indispensable that, to progress, we must be solidly linked with what has preceded us. We must not break the tie with musical tradition. A branch separated from the trunk quickly dies ... Economy of means seems to me more difficult, but also more useful, than a too headstrong audacity. There is no profit in smashing the door which you might open.<sup>24</sup>

However, while it is tempting to overdramatize Honegger's outsider status in relation to *Les Six*, it is important to take a nuanced view of the group and of Honegger's relationship to it. This relationship was a complicated one and shifted over time. While the evidence reveals some fractious divisions, it also shows several striking musical correspondences between Honegger and the rest of *Les Six*. First, Honegger's lack of interest in drawing from popular music sources—"music of the fairgrounds and the music hall"—was shared both by Tailleferre and by Durey. Only Poulenc, Auric, and Milhaud, in contrast, made explicit use of popular music sources.<sup>25</sup>

Second, in emphasizing musical architecture, chamber, and symphonic music as early as 1920, Honegger even anticipates the work of the Milhaud-Auric-Poulenc wing of *Les Six*. By 1924, Milhaud, Auric, and Poulenc had each adopted classical forms and models, *replacing* their use of popular music sources.<sup>26</sup> Finally, Honegger's quotation above accords an enhanced role for polyphony in his own music. Although individual practice differed, this linear orientation was largely shared by all of the group.

These last two components, the regeneration of classical forms and the linear orientation, broadly constructed a shared neoclassical aesthetic among *Les Six*. A clarity of form and line was to provide an alternative to the harmonic and formal vagueness of Impressionism. As Milhaud maintained, "What musicians asked for now was a clearer, sturdier, more precise type of art that should not yet

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<sup>24</sup> Honegger, *Composer*, 93-4. The quote originally appeared in Honegger's article "Petit historique nécessaire," *Le Courrier musical* (February 1, 1922).

<sup>25</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the role of popular music sources in *Les Six*, see Nancy Perloff, *Art and the Everyday: Popular Entertainment and the Circle of Erik Satie* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*