

BRANDING BRUSSELS MUSICALLY:
COSMOPOLITANISM AND NATIONALISM IN THE INTERWAR YEARS

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ABSTRACT

Catherine A. Hughes: Branding Brussels Musically:
Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism in the Interwar Years
(Under the direction of Annegret Fauser)

In Belgium, constructions of musical life in Brussels between the World Wars varied widely: some viewed the city as a major musical center, and others framed the city as a peripheral space to its larger neighbors. Both views, however, based the city's identity on an intense interest in new foreign music, with works by Belgian composers taking a secondary importance. This modern and cosmopolitan concept of cultural achievement offered an alternative to the more traditional model of national identity as being built solely on creations by native artists sharing local traditions. Such a model eluded a country with competing ethnic groups: the Francophone Walloons in the south and the Flemish in the north. Openness to a wide variety of music became a hallmark of the capital's cultural identity. As a result, the forces of Belgian cultural identity, patriotism, internationalism, interest in foreign culture, and conflicting views of modern music complicated the construction of Belgian cultural identity through music.

By focusing on the work of the four central people in the network of organizers, patrons, and performers that sustained the art music culture in the Belgian capital, this dissertation challenges assumptions about construction of musical culture. Paul Collaer, Henry Le Bœuf, Corneil de Thoran, and Queen Elisabeth of the Belgians each responded to the cultural and political forces by supporting the newest in music and Belgian composers, drawing from both cosmopolitan and nationalist impulses in their organization of performances. This dissertation

contributes to current discussions in musicology about processes of cross-cultural exchange, cultural appropriation, and cosmopolitanism. It also enriches current understanding of the roles of patrons, concert organizers, and institutional directors in the circulation of new music and the construction and conception of cohesive musical cultures. Finally, it offers a framework with which musicologists might consider local music identities in smaller European cultural centers that fostered cosmopolitan attitudes and established identities distinct from those of such dominant international cities as Paris, London, and Vienna.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

asbl	association sans but lucratif (non-profit organization)
IHE	Institut des Hautes Etudes
ISCM	International Society for Contemporary Music
OSAC	Ochestre Symphonique de l'Armée en Campagne
PBA	Palais des Beaux-Arts
SACEM	Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Editeurs de Musique
TRM	Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie
ULB	Université Libre de Bruxelles

Archival Collections

ASRE	Archives du Secrétariat de la Reine Elisabeth, Archives du Palais Royal
ASPh	Archives de la Société Philharmonique, Palais des Beaux-Arts
AVB	Archives de la Ville de Bruxelles
AvVVT	Archief van het Vlaamsche Volkstoneel, KADOC, Documentatie-en- Onderzoekscentrum voor Religie, Cultuur en Samenleving, Leuven
FHLB	Fonds Henry Le Bœuf, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique/ Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België
FPC	Fonds Paul et Elsa Collaer, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique/ Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België
KBR	Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique/ Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België

INTRODUCTION

For two weeks in the spring of 1936, Brussels hosted an international music festival, the *Soirées de Bruxelles*. The festival, took place only once, with a program featuring new works by foreign composers, one concert dedicated to new Belgian works, an evening of early music, a production of Beethoven's *Fidelio*, and an all-Mozart concert. Its organizers and supporters framed the *Soirées de Bruxelles* as a celebration of Brussels and of new music. Eight weeks before its opening, Brussels's mayor Adolphe Max, announcing the festival, described it in a rousing address to the press:

Nous avons voulu mettre en évidence le fait que Bruxelles est devenu un véritable centre d'art. [...].

Je crois qu'il est opportun d'attirer l'attention sur l'intensité de la vie esthétique dont [...] la Belgique est aujourd'hui le théâtre et en ce faisant nous avons la conviction de servir les intérêts et le renom de notre Pays.¹

Marcel Cuvelier, the director of the festival, explained: "Le but de ce festival est de présenter chaque année à un public international, curieux des tendances d'aujourd'hui, une sorte de panorama des œuvres les plus représentatives et les plus marquantes de notre époque."² The emphasis on attracting international attention to the city's musical life, and especially the emphasis on performances of new music there, was a familiar refrain by 1936. With origins in the nineteenth century, such a vision of the capital city was central to Belgian constructions of a national musical identity.

¹"Discours de Monsieur Max," typescript, Archives de la Société Philharmonique (ASPh), Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Box 16.

²"Interview [sic] de Monsieur Cuvelier, directeur du Comité exécutif des 'Soirées de Bruxelles,'" 22 April 1936, ASPh, Box 13/66.

This dissertation tells the story of Belgian aspirations to establish and perpetuate Brussels's reputation as a center for cosmopolitan taste and performance of new music, putting the city at the heart of Europe. Between 1918 and 1936, Brussels saw a proliferation of new concert series whose organizers insisted that their dedication to providing an outlet for new music filled a lacuna in the cultural life of the city. Among these organizers, Henry Le Bœuf, Paul Collaer, Corneil de Thoran, and Queen Elisabeth were the most influential in shaping the city's institutions and the musical tastes of their contemporaries. I offer a new perspective on the city's musical life by considering the biographies of the four organizers as intersecting narratives that show how a network of people functioned within the machinery of the Belgian capital's cultural organization. Such a perspective, which shows how each individual and the organizations to which they were connected, is important because it gives a comprehensive view of the groups of people, the underlying concerns that informed and connected programming of different organizations, and the intersection of collaboration and competition that shaped the musical culture of the city. Previous studies of music in interwar Brussels, by contrast, offer in-depth analyses of individual organizations, often overlooking, or glossing over such connections. The result of these is a series of piecemeal findings. As heads of the largest musical institutions in the city, Le Bœuf, Collaer, de Thoran, Elisabeth, and their collaborators were arbiters of taste. With wide-reaching political and cultural influence and substantial financial means, they also responded to the forces of cosmopolitan tastes of their peers abroad, to Belgian nationalist rhetoric of the post-World War I era, and to political and economic shifts that marked the interwar period. Together, they molded the cultural scene of Brussels into a crossroads for new music. Their shared goals, which they pursued through their organizations, represented at once a cosmopolitan worldview and a Belgian national identity that masked the underlying differences

and complexities of a nation divided over cultural, linguistic, and political difference between the Flemish and Walloon populations. Likewise, their rhetoric extolling the importance of new music in Brussels often belied a musical culture that relied heavily on nineteenth-century repertoire and traditional programming strategies. So persistent was the conception of the city's identity as cosmopolitan and modern, however, that it dominates views of Brussels even today.

Why Brussels?

There was a conflict at the heart of constructions of Brussels's cultural identity in the interwar period. On the one hand, Belgians struggled with the anxiety that their capital was a provincial or secondary city in Europe, especially after four years of isolation during the 1914–18 German occupation. Comparisons, both by Belgians and foreigners, of the Belgian capital to other European cities—particularly Paris—suggested that Brussels's fate was to be a peripheral or ancillary city that modeled itself after larger and more powerful urban centers. On the other hand, leaders of the Belgian intellectual and social elite claimed that their city was a key cultural center in Europe, by virtue of both its geographical position between Germany and France and the refined taste of its audiences.

Brussels's proximity to Paris, the circulation of musicians between them, and the resulting cross-pollination of ideas had the effect of placing the Belgian capital in the shadow of the French capital. In the early twentieth century, Belgians and French alike treated Brussels as a satellite of Paris. Contemporary descriptions of Brussels's relationship to Paris, Walter Benjamin's description of Paris as "the capital of the nineteenth century," and musicological studies of twentieth-century music have had the effect of placing Brussels in the shadow of its

larger neighbor.³ This dissertation aims to bring Brussels out of that shadow by examining musical life there on its own terms, instead of in comparison with that of Paris.

The structure of musical life and culture in interwar Brussels was distinct from that of Paris. The differences were the result of both the cities' respective sizes and the ways musical institutions functioned. In 1930, the population of the French capital was three times that of the Belgian capital. Paris also enjoyed the circulation of many tourists, students, and other visitors. The French concert organizers, therefore, had a much larger pool of potential concertgoers. By contrast, the problem of "oversaturating" the more limited group of people who were inclined to attend performances of art music arose repeatedly in interwar Brussels. Furthermore, in Paris, professional musicians dominated the institutions that supported the rich musical culture. They worked in administrative and directorial roles as well as in creative roles. Although amateur musicians and patrons, including the Countess Greffulhe and the Princess de Polignac, built their reputations as administrators and organizers, their reputations rested on their associations with public institutions run by professional musicians. In Brussels, by contrast, the musical life relied heavily on a network of amateur musicians who translated their enthusiasm for music into roles as institutional administrators. Many Belgian musicians who trained in the national conservatory system, however, went abroad to study and to build their careers, only returning after they had established themselves elsewhere. As a result, in many cases it was left to amateurs to carve out places for professional musicians, both native and foreign, in the city's cultural life. Association with these non-professionals, therefore, was key for a musician's career in the Belgian capital. The four individuals whom I study here were the most important figures in the network of amateurs who claimed authority over the structure of the city's musical life.

³Walter Benjamin, "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms and Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovitch, 1978), 142–62.

Leading composers of the period wrote about Brussels, the reception of their music there, and their interactions with the leaders of the city's musical life with fondness. Even as they indicated the importance of the performance of their works in the Belgian capital to the trajectories of their careers, the city remained a peripheral space in their writing. After a performance of four of his works in Brussels on 17 January 1923, Francis Poulenc wrote to Igor Stravinsky: "Je suis ravi de mon séjour ici. *J'entends enfin ma musique bien interprétée dans une salle pour musique de chambre et devant un public qui ne cherche pas à rire.*"⁴ Stravinsky himself wrote in his 1936 autobiography that his appearances as pianist and conductor in Brussels, followed closely by performances in Spain, marked the beginning of his career as a performer of his own compositions.⁵ Prompted by his elections into the Classe des Beaux-Arts in 1974, Darius Milhaud wrote one of the most laudatory descriptions of the city's significance between the wars. His article "Ce que je dois à la Belgique," compared the reception of his *Cinq études pour piano et orchestre* in Paris and in Brussels:

Ce dernier morceau avait provoqué un tel scandale lors de la première audition à Paris que les agents de police s'étaient spontanément postés devant la porte de ma loge afin de me défendre. A Bruxelles, tout se passa calmement. Le public belge juge posément, sans passion excessive et sans scepticisme, ce qui est très important pour un jeune créateur.⁶

⁴Francis Poulenc, *Correspondance, 1910–1963*, ed. Myriam Chimènes (Paris: Fayard, 1994), 186.

⁵Igor Stravinsky, *An Autobiography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936), 177.

⁶Darius Milhaud, "Ce que je dois à la Belgique" *Bulletin de la Classe des Beaux-Arts* 5 no. 56 (1974): 121. René Bernier presented this address at a meeting of the Classe des Beaux-Arts at the Académie Royale in Brussels. Milhaud's praise for Brussels audiences is nearly identical to one he offered in an interview for *L'Indépendance belge* in 1935 (W.D., "Eschyle à la Monnaie. Darius Milhaud nous parle des 'Choéphores,'" *L'Indépendance belge*, 16 March 1935). In 1977, Polish composer Alexandre Tansman was also elected to the Classe des Beaux Arts. His address to the assembly mirrors Milhaud's article. He claims: "je suis rentré rapidement dans le mouvement international de l'avant-garde des années 20 et j'ai été aussitôt adopté par Bruxelles qui, avec Paris, était le grand centre musical où il se passait quelque chose et où la musique contemporaine était accueillie sans aucun snobisme, mais par une sorte de triage de qualité." Alexandre Tansman, "Le rôle de la Belgique dans mon évolution et mon activité de compositeur," in *Une voie lyrique dans un siècle bouleversé*, ed. Mireille Tansman-Zanuttini (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 119. The laudatory language in these addresses is unsurprising, given the venue and audience.

Not only did Belgians organize performances of new works by composers of post-war modernism, but the capital's audience functioned as a useful sounding board against which they could test their newest ideas. Brussels's status, however, rested on its standing as a city that confirmed reputations that had been established elsewhere, rather than as a place that established these reputations.

Furthermore, memories of pre-war cultural triumphs in Brussels were still fresh. The parade of new French-language productions of Wagner's operas and world premieres of French operas rejected by the Paris Opéra on the stage of the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, appearances by leading conductors and composers at the city's Concerts Populaires, and the remarkable gatherings organized by the artistic groups Les XX and La Libre Esthétique were points of pride for the city. For the optimistic leaders in Brussels, such pre-war events were proof that the city determined its own cultural profile, independent of its larger neighbors.

Cultural life in Brussels both before and after the war was also intertwined with the legacy of Belgian colonialism. Under Léopold II's reign, Brussels became the center of an empire. Many of the leaders of the intellectual and social elite in the city benefitted either directly or indirectly from Belgium's financial interests in the colony. The face of the capital changed dramatically as the king used profits from the Congo to launch monumental building projects, including the Palais de Justice, the Palais des Beaux-Arts (now the Musée de l'Art Ancien), the massive greenhouses at the royal palace in Laeken, and the complex of buildings at the Parc du Cinquanteaire.⁷ Financial connections between Belgian interests in the Congo and the musical life in Belgium continued well into the twentieth century, with leading financiers at the helm of companies that exploited resources in Africa not only funding, but also having a

⁷For more on Léopold's urban planning projects in Brussels, see Liane Ranieri, *Léopold II, urbaniste* (Brussels: Hayez, 1973).

hand in organizing the most remarkable events in interwar Brussels. In fact, in order to depict Belgium in the best possible light during the interwar years, the government carefully curated the memory of Leopold II's hand in creating the Congo Free State, the facts of the Belgian presence in Africa, and the impact of colonialism in Europe.⁸

The competing view of Brussels as peripheral and as part of a land that was largely forgotten and mysterious was for some more viable than the image of the capital city of a colonial power. Belgian journalist Charles d'Ydewalle, for one, exploited this image. He recounted writer Emile Verhaeren's interactions during his travels abroad:

Voyageant en pays basque, il [Verhaeren] déclara sa nationalité à un notable du pays qui lui dit: 'Oh! la Belgique! c'est un pays où l'on chasse le tigre'. [...] [E]n Poitou [France], il demanda à un aubergiste ce qu'il savait de la Belgique et celui-ci répondit que, certes il s'agissait d'un ordre religieux évangélisant la Chine et le Japon.⁹

The image of the forgotten, hazy Belgium with romantic connotations of faraway adventure, was serviceable for the nation during and after World War I, especially in perpetuating the myth of "Gallant little Belgium." D'Ydewalle, for one, insisted on the status of Brussels as a peripheral city in the interwar period.¹⁰

⁸For more on the ways the Belgian presence in Africa was presented to European audiences, see Matthew G. Stanard, *Selling the Congo: A History of European Pro-Empire Propaganda and the Making of Belgian Imperialism* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011). Stanard focuses on moments when representations of the Congo were opportune (particularly in the form of the construction of public monuments, exhibits at World's Fairs, and in education), and does not discuss the process of erasing or silencing the effects of colonialism in Europe and in Africa at other historical moments.

⁹Charles d'Ydewalle, *Elisabeth de Belgique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1964), 81.

¹⁰In 1945, for instance, he described interwar Brussels: "Admirable capitale dont les orateurs faciles de fin de banquet proclament volontiers les charmes et qu'ils comparent 'à un petit Paris'. Comparaison saugrenue pour quiconque connaît les deux villes. Bruxelles a son charme, sa beauté, sa drôlerie surtout, mais certainement ne ressemble pas à Paris, pas plus qu'à Londres et pas plus qu'à Budapest. [...] Pour la vie intellectuelle, tout y serait terriblement languissant s'il n'y avait les conférenciers parisiens, les comédiens en tournée, aussi parisiens, et les exilés. Heureusement, il y a les exilés." Charles d'Ydewalle, *La Cour et la Ville 1924-1940* (Brussels: Les Editions Libres, 1945), 102.

Aspirations to make the Belgian capital a center for modern music in the 1920s and 1930s—rather than a forgotten or mysterious city— were attractive and gripping. The realization of such goals would at once confirm the city’s importance on the international stage, allay fears that it lagged behind other urban centers, and help to veil or justify Belgian imperialist pursuits in Africa. Yet the conflicting visions of the same place have made the city a difficult subject of study for Belgians and outsiders alike. It also created a rich landscape against which to consider assumptions about constructions of musical culture, national identity, cultural transfer, cosmopolitanism, and international networks of people. My work offers nuanced perspectives on these broad themes by showing that the conceptions of Brussels as a center and a periphery are not mutually exclusive, but rather worked together in productive ways. Drawing from the work of scholars of French and German music about constructions of national and local identities, I expand their approaches to show how they might be applied to cities other than Paris, Vienna, Munich, or Berlin.¹¹

Discussions about Brussels are further complicated by its position as the capital city of a nation with two distinct regions. The linguistic, cultural, political, and economic differences

¹¹See discussions of music’s power to shape or express national and local identities and music in: Celia Applegate, “What is German Music? Reflections on the Role of Art in the Creation of the Nation,” *German Studies Review* 15 (1992): 21–32; Katherine Bergeron, *Voice Lessons: French Mélodie in the Belle Époque* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past: Early Music in Nineteenth-Century France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Annegret Fauser, *Musical Encounters at the 1889 Paris World’s Fair* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005); Walter Frisch, *German Modernism: Music, and the Arts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Jane Fulcher, *French Cultural Politics & Music: From the Dreyfus Affair to the First World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Jane Fulcher, *The Composer as Intellectual: Music and Ideology in France 1914–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Kevin Karnes, *Music, Criticism and the Challenge of History: Shaping Modern Musical Thought in Late Nineteenth-Century Vienna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Barbara L. Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France: A Fragile Consensus, 1913–1939* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013); Barbara L. Kelly, “Introduction: The Roles of Music and Culture in National Identity Formation,” in *French Music, Culture, and National Identity, 1870–1939*, ed. Barbara L. Kelly (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 1–14; Carol Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jann Pasler, *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); and Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981).

between Flanders and Wallonia, which were in place since the creation of the nation in 1830, continued to be a source of tension and strife during the 1920s and 1930s. Debates over political interests, economic structures, educational systems, and many other concerns traditionally took place through discussions over the use of language. With French as the dominant language of the central government and the social and intellectual elites, Flemish-speaking groups advocated for better representation, or for secession from the constructed political nation of Belgium.¹²

Although Brussels lies geographically in Flanders, the intellectual and political life took place primarily in French. In their musical endeavors, Le Bœuf, Collaer, de Thoran, and Elisabeth each negotiated—and sometimes sidestepped—the issue of linguistic divides and constructions of national and regional identities as they pursued their goals for their organizations, their city, and their nation.¹³ Their positions defined the parameters within which they could move: as queen, for instance, Elisabeth needed to transcend the divide between Walloon and Flemish subjects in her artistic patronage; whereas Le Bœuf, a prominent businessman, was free to follow his artistic predilections, but was bound to the financial concerns of his organizations.

¹²The Flemish Movement emerged in the late nineteenth century, advocating for Flemish-language schools, government protocols, and protection of Flemish culture against the increasing Francophone dominance. The Walloon Movement arose in Brussels in reaction to this agenda, looking to protect the interests of Francophones living in Flanders. By the beginning of World War I, the Flemish Movement had two major groups. The first adopted an anti-Belgian stance and advocated for a Flemish nation separate from Belgium, while the second remained loyal to the Belgian state and continued to promote official recognition of the Flemish sub-nation. See Louis Vos, “The Flemish National Question,” in *Nationalism in Belgium: Shifting Identities, 1780–1995*, ed. Kas Desprez and Louis Vos (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 83–95; Carl Strikwerda, *A House Divided: Catholics, Socialists, and Flemish Nationalists in Nineteenth-Century Belgium* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997); Pierre Stéphany, *Les années ’20–’30: La Belgique entre les deux guerres*, vol. 1, *l’ère période: 1918–1929 ou l’après-guerre* (Brussels: Paul Legrain, 1983), 22–23, 76–86.

¹³My interpretation of national identity as a contested concept in Belgium draws from foundational texts in critical and cultural theory including: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 2006); Homi K. Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration* (New York: Routledge, 1990); and Pierre Nora, ed., *Rethinking the French Past: Realms of Memory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

Historical Context

Belgium's ongoing struggles to define itself linguistically, culturally, and politically in the wake of World War I were connected to contradictory feelings towards the nation's history: alienation from the pre-war past, awareness of historical continuity, and confrontation with the structures of the recent past. Each of my chapters considers the push and pull between the past and the present. At a time when the trauma of war left Europe struggling to face the uncertainty of the future, Le Bœuf, Collaer, de Thoran, and Elisabeth each adopted pre-war structures for their enterprises and relied heavily on their pre-war educations. They modified late-nineteenth century configurations of music patronage to fit their needs.¹⁴ In Brussels, the new musical styles that emerged after the war were introduced to audiences through the relatively traditional concert structures that had shaped the city's reputation in the late nineteenth century.

Many of the cultural, political, and financial leaders in Brussels in the early twentieth century studied at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, where they espoused the ideals of socialism and liberalism that shaped their cultural work well into the 1930s. Student groups brought future lawyers and political leaders together to discuss the arts, politics, and social issues outside of the curricula of their chosen professions. As these students integrated themselves into the political and business spheres, the liberal intellectualism and socialism that they embraced as students became synonymous with the identity of Brussels, and was the driving force behind many of the defining political decisions in Belgium, in domestic and foreign affairs. In addition to their roles in industry, finance, and politics, they were instrumental in organizing cultural institutions and events.

¹⁴In recent musicological studies, the common narrative that describes World War I creating an irreconcilable rift between pre-war and post-war generations, followed by a proliferation of modernist exploration, has been reevaluated in favor of a more nuanced understanding that also takes continuities into account. See Glenn Watkins, *Proof through the Night: Music and the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France*.

In the 1870s, Brussels saw the development of a series of independent artistic circles, most of which exhibited socialist sympathies. Almost all included concerts and lectures about new music in their programs. Frequented by the intellectual bourgeoisie, and straddling the public-private divide, these pre-war circles served as examples for the post-war organizations that focused on modernist art. Supporters of new music in Brussels often involved themselves in every aspect of the musical culture of the city: from small concerts in private homes to large concert organizations, from music criticism to performance, from memberships in intellectual clubs to seats on national and international organizational committees. As a result, in Brussels, public organizations were often extensions of private circles or groups and private circles were connected to public organizations. The most influential of these circles were Les XX, founded in 1883, and its successor, La Libre Esthétique. These circles focused primarily on the visual arts, giving the Belgian surrealists and symbolists a place to display their work and inviting foreign artists to exhibit in Brussels. In conjunction with the annual art shows, Octave Maus, secretary of Les XX and director of La Libre Esthétique, organized chamber music concerts to showcase new music, most of which was foreign. He collaborated with French composer Vincent d'Indy and the Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe to create programs of new music.¹⁵

Socialist lawyer Edmond Picard's group, named simply "L'Art," organized art exhibitions, concerts, and theatrical productions at his luxurious mansion between 1894 and 1900. These events were nominally public, but the society required all visitors to request admission in writing. The policy effectively eliminated casual visitors, making the Maison d'Art

¹⁵Maus's wife, Madeleine Octave Maus, provides programs for each of the concerts presented by Les XX and La Libre Esthétique in her account of Maus's career, *Trente années de lutte pour l'art: Les XX et La Libre Esthétique, 1884–1914* (Brussels: Édition Lebeer Hossmann, 1980).

an artistic club, where a limited audience made up of like-minded artists and patrons gathered.¹⁶ Other artistic circles included the Cercle Artistique et Littéraire, the Cercle Sillon, and the Société du Concert Noble. These groups offered lectures and recitals open only to their members. Participants in these circles also hosted even more intimate meetings in their private homes. Adolphe and Suzanne Stoclet presented private recitals in their home in Tervuren. Paul Errara, the rector of the ULB beginning in 1890, and his wife Isabelle held an artistic and literary salon at their home, attended by many artists who enjoyed the support of the Libre Esthétique. Performances in these private settings influenced the concert programming for large organizations that catered to general paying audiences. New repertoire was “tested” in more circumscribed spaces and only then offered in public spaces. This pattern, as I will show, continued well into the twentieth century, especially with Henry Le Bœuf’s private readings of new music and Queen Elisabeth’s intimate musical gatherings at court. In fact, the fluidity between private and public spaces precludes a clear division between the two kinds of spaces and the types of interactions that took place in them.¹⁷

Cultural leaders aligned themselves with socialist ideals, at least in the most abstract terms. The Parti Ouvrier Belge, founded in 1885, took up the mantle of universal suffrage and abandoned more revolutionary stances in the early 1890s. By doing so, the party became closely aligned with leaders of the Liberal Party, to which many members of the bourgeoisie were

¹⁶Jane Block, “La Maison d’Art: Edmond Picard’s Asylum of Beauty,” in *Irréalisme et art moderne: les voies de l’imaginaire dans l’art des XVIII^e, XIX^e et XX^e siècles*, ed. Michel Draguet (Brussels: Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1992), 249–52; Tatiana Debroux, Valérie Dufour, Catherine A. Hughes, and Christopher Brent Murray, “Toward Mapping Recitals in *fin de siècle* Brussels,” *Ad Parnassum* 12, no. 24 (October 2014): 135–52.

¹⁷For more on the distinction between the public and private, see Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977). Sennett’s theories use gendered language that placed women in the “moral” private domain and men in the “immoral” public domain that is particularly applicable to my discussion of Elisabeth in chapter 4.

connected.¹⁸ Leaders in Belgian politics negotiated a complex web of relationships across partisan lines, as socialists, liberals, and monarchists vied for dominance.¹⁹ Socialist ideals also pervaded the cultural sphere. Projects such as the Universités Populaires and cultural programming at the Parti Ouvrier Belge's Maison du Peuple, created in order to offer continuing education to the working classes in the major cities in Belgium, purported to work towards uplift of the masses. Artistic groups often expressed socialist principles, even when the groups themselves remained in the domain of the wealthy and privileged. Picard, for example, insisted on the social dimension of art: "Quand l'art n'a pas un but social, il est secondaire et doit être jugé comme un luxe bourgeois assez méprisable."²⁰ Such social idealism was often at odds with the reality that cultural leaders were still from the privileged upper middle classes treating the question of the culture of the working classes as observers rather than participants. In fact, despite their dedication to bringing art to the masses, the intellectual elite who were at the helm of the many musical organizations in Brussels were often accused of being snobs.

Accusations of snobbery were tied up with class distinctions. Not only were there clear distinctions based on wealth and education, but there was also a divide between the social elite—dominated by the aristocracy— and the intellectual elite. These distinctions, created in part by the complex negotiation between the intellectual engagement with socialist ideals and the practicalities of Belgian politics, continued to inform the structures of musical life in post-war

¹⁸Valérie Montens, "Victor Horta's Clients," in *Horta: Art Nouveau to Modernism*, ed. Françoise Aubry and Jos Vandenbreen (Ghent: Ludion Press, 1997), 129. Masonic societies also brought together the intellectual elite. Among these groups, one of the most influential was Les Amis Philanthropes, which counted engineers, lawyers, doctors, and industrialists among its members.

¹⁹Janet Polasky's discussion of Emile Vandervelde's approach to socialism through reform rather than revolution, his shifting relationships with the socialist movements in Belgium, and his friendship with King Albert I illustrates the complicated nature of political entanglements in Belgium at the beginning of the twentieth century. *The Democratic Socialism of Emile Vandervelde: Between Reform and Revolution* (Washington, DC: Berg, 1995).

²⁰Quoted in Jean-Pierre Muller, *Paul Collaer et Octave Maus: 70 ans d'avant-garde musicale à Bruxelles* (Brussels: RTBF, 1982), 19.

Brussels. The audience for art music in the interwar period was predominantly made up of the university-educated and geographically mobile members of the upper bourgeoisie and the aristocracy.²¹ These were the concert-goers who embraced the ideas of the avant-garde, or at least the cultural capital that was associated with “musique savante.”²² When composers of the period celebrated the openness of the concertgoers in Brussels, they were celebrating this relatively circumscribed group.²³

The vibrant musical life in Brussels ground to a halt with the beginning of the German occupation in August 1914. The planned 1914–15 seasons for the Concerts Populaires and the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie (TRM) did not take place. The German occupying forces regularly requisitioned the theater for performances by travelling German companies. In the face of German domination of the musical life of the city, nationalist sentiment among Belgian musicians who remained in the city was strong. In a letter to Queen Elisabeth, dated 31 August 1915, Henry Le Bœuf characterized the sentiment in the capital city:

²¹Fabrice d’Almeida insists upon the significance of geographical mobility for the elite in Europe, and particularly in the twentieth century, when membership in transnational societies and political parties was a marker of privilege and allowed communication across borders. Introduction to *La circulation des élites européennes: entre histoire des idées et histoire sociale*, ed. Henri Bresc, Fabrice d’Almeida, and Jean-Michel Sallmann (Paris: Editions Seli Arslan, 2002).

²²Susan McClary discusses the prestige associated with listening to “difficult music” in “Terminal Prestige: The Case of Avant-Garde Music Composition,” *Cultural Critique* 12 (1989): 57–81. Leon Botstein considers the shifting role of audiences and changing attitudes about new music in fin-de-siècle Vienna in his dissertation, “Music and Its Public: Habits of Listening and the Crisis of Musical Modernism in Vienna, 1870–1914,” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1985); see also Leon Botstein, “Schoenberg and the Audience: Modernism, Music, and Politics in the Twentieth Century,” in *Schoenberg and His World*, ed. Walter Frisch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 19–54.

²³Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital is a useful theoretical framework in this context. The intellectual and social elite in Brussels controlled the system of cultural exchange analogous to that of an economic system. Cultural capital exists in three forms: objectified capital, the products of culture (paintings, musical works, literature); embodied capital, the ideas and attitudes which are expressed through individual works; and institutionalized capital, the recognition of cultural mastery (especially in the form of conferring degrees). Controlling these three forms of capital both marked and enforced the system of social hierarchies upon which Belgian society rested. “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 241–58.

Chez nous, la léthargie est profonde; mais elle cache une sentiment patriotique plus intacte et plus puissant que jamais. Un an d'efforts d'une autorité étrangère n'a abouté qu'à cémenter plus solidement la notion de la Patrie. Nos souverains sont devenus un symbole que les habitants, dans les campagnes les plus reculées, vénèrent et dont le culte entretient la certitude de la restauration du Pays. Cela est émouvant et d'une force qui impressionne grandement l'occupant. Il se rend compte certainement que le calme de la population n'est pas une acceptation mais prouve seulement la patience obstinée des deux races, qui savent que leur maux sont provisoires, bien qu'elles s'apprêtent à les souffrir peut-être longtemps encore.²⁴

Belgians boycotted musical events organized by the German occupiers and instead organized their own private concerts and concert series within the limitations enforced by German censorship.²⁵

Although musical activity continued in the city during the war, Brussels had only limited access to the new music of the 1910s. As Belgium emerged from German occupation in November 1918, musicians and organizers expressed concern that they were behind the times, having missed some of the most important musical events of the decade and not having had the opportunity to mount performances of the newest music from Paris, Berlin, and Vienna.²⁶ The resulting anxiety of provincialism drove many of the programming decisions of the immediate post-war era, as Brussels attempted to “catch up” with the rest of Europe.

This process of jump-starting Brussels's musical life took place against a complex political background. After World War I, the nation struggled to redefine itself politically and culturally. National leaders set about abolishing Belgian neutrality, which had been a condition

²⁴Henry Le Bœuf to Queen Elisabeth, 31 August 1915. Archives du Secrétariat de la Reine Elisabeth, Archives du Palais Royal (ASRE).

²⁵In her dissertation, Rachel Moore demonstrates the continued musical activity in Paris during World War I, challenging the common narrative that all musical activity stopped under German occupation. A similar study of music in Brussels between 1914 and 1918 has yet to be written. “Performing Propaganda: Musical Life and Culture in Paris, 1914–1918,” Ph.D. diss, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2012.

²⁶Exceptions to this isolation from Paris included a performance of Debussy's wartime sonatas.

of the creation of the nation in 1830.²⁷ The nation also faced the physical and economic devastation left by the German occupation, from housing shortages to raging unemployment. Debates about language and cultural identity escalated at the same time.²⁸ In November 1922, the country voted on King Albert I's proposal to re-organize the University of Ghent as the nation's first Flemish-language university. The debates about the university underlined the continuing problem of building a unified national identity that allowed for the cultural and linguistic distinctions between Flanders and Wallonia.²⁹ Furthermore, some intellectual and cultural leaders pushed to construct a unified national identity based on historical and geographical arguments. Historian Henri Pirenne, for instance, argued that Belgian history existed,

réellement, en dépit des apparences [...]. Nos destinées n'ont pas été le jouet du hasard et de l'arbitraire. Leur développement, dans ce qu'il présent de continu, et pour ainsi dire, d'organique, peut et doit être un objet d'étude.³⁰

²⁷For more on the negotiations to abolish Belgium's official neutrality during the negotiations for the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, see Jane Kathryn Miller, *Belgian Foreign Policy Between Two Wars, 1919–1940* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1951).

²⁸Accusations that Flemish-speakers had sympathized and collaborated with the German occupiers persisted, and according to a writer for *Pourquoi pas?* this association framed foreign perceptions of the political climate in Belgium well into the 1920s: "il y a de 'bons Wallons' qui aiment la France et de 'vilains Flamignants' qui sont des Boches." ("La question flamande et les Français," *Pourquoi pas?* 9, no. 771 [10 May 1929]). Flemish soldiers' experiences at the front during the war also informed post-war rhetoric about language equality. The Belgian military operated exclusively in French, forcing Flemish-speakers to use a foreign language.

²⁹"La Réunion des Chambres: Une Séance Historique," *Le Soir*, 23 November 1918.

³⁰Henri Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique* (Brussels: Henri Lamertin, 1908–1920; Maurice Lamertin, 1926–1932), IX. Pirenne was a professor of history at the University of Ghent from 1886 until 1930. His reputation as a national hero was cemented during World War I. German authorities arrested and questioned him before he was interned from August 1916 until the end of the war. During his imprisonment, he started work on his history of medieval Europe. Pirenne's work brought about a dramatic shift in thinking about Belgian identity before the foundation of the Belgian state. Instead of discussing Belgian roots in terms of a persistent national character of the people, Pirenne's study is grounded on a study of social and economic factors. See also Jean Stengers, "La Belgique, un accident de l'histoire?" in *A l'enseigne de la Belgique nouvelle*, ed. Marc Uyttendaele (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1989), 19–20; and Herman Vander Linden "Histoire de notre nom national," *Bulletin de la Classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques* 5 no. 16 (1930): 160–74.

Pirenne aimed to prove that social, cultural, and economic forces had held the Flemings and Walloons together throughout history. This “Belgian civilization,” he argued, existed long before 1830.

The period between 1918 until 1940 resists treatment as a unified period. In fact, those who lived and shaped the profile of the time in Belgium, as elsewhere in Europe, often framed this period as having two distinct phases: recovery from World War I in the 1920s, followed by the events leading to World War II in the 1930s. A shift in artistic sensibilities in Brussels, reflected in much of the music programming especially, moved from the spirit of experimentation and exploration in the 1920s, to an increasing search for balance between the new and the old in the 1930s. In his post-World War II writing, Collaer, for instance, approached the interwar repertoire from a historical perspective, splitting the interwar years into two distinct periods: from 1912 to the mid-1920s, when composers shocked the public by upsetting tradition; and from the mid-1920s to 1940, when the confusion and aggression gave way to assurance in the new compositional techniques, both on the part of the composers and the listeners.³¹ The twenty-year period between the wars also brought the Great Depression, the rise of Fascism in Europe, and the intensification of nationalist sentiment, all of which affected musical structures in Brussels, as concert organizers sought to define Belgian national identity through music.

³¹Collaer was not consistent about the year that marks the change. In “‘Cinquante ans après.’ Notes concernant Satie et le Groupe des ‘Six’: 1917–1923,” Collaer marks the beginning of the second period as 1923 (*Festschrift für Ernst Hermann Meyer zum sechzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Georg Knepler (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1973), 273–79). Later, he defined the two periods as 1912–1930 and 1930–1940 in “Où en est la musique contemporaine,” *La Revue Internationale de Musique* 9 (Winter 1950–51): 207–14. In his book, *La musique moderne 1905–1955* (2nd ed., preface by Claude Rostand [Brussels: Elsevier, 1955], 29–32), Collaer expands this periodization to describe the development of modern music across four periods. Pierre Stéphany’s conception of the 1920s as a period of “post-war” recovery and rediscovery and the 1930s as a “pre-war” period leading up to the second German occupation mirrors Collaer’s construction. This division of the interwar period proves to a useful framework for my discussion of the history of Brussels’s musical life, with 1928 as a turning point in the structures of symphonic and chamber music organizations, in opera programming, and even in musical activities at the royal court (*Les années ‘20–‘30*).

The Question of Musical Culture

My work brings the concepts of the musical culture and musical identity of a city to the fore. Although the two are linked, my study of Brussels shows that these concepts are not synonymous. Musical culture, the broader of the two concepts as I understand them, is the set of activities and practices that produce a construction of musical identity. Musical identity is an abstract, generalized, and idealized conception of what the musical activities do. The two concepts inform each other. By examining how Le Bœuf, Collaer, de Thoran, and Elisabeth, and shaped the musical activities in Brussels, I show that understanding who produces, supports, and perpetuates musical activity is key to unraveling the meaning behind broader and even conflicting, descriptions of a city's musical identity. The disparity between descriptions of interwar Brussels as a center for modern music, on the one hand, and as a secondary European city, on the other, offers a particularly rich space in which to explore the relationship between musical culture and musical identity of place.³²

I recognize that I subscribe to three common assumptions about musical life in my work. First, that where there is musical performance, there must be a definable musical life. Second, that a city has a musical life that is identifiable and that can be described succinctly. Third, that musical life depends on musical organizations and institutions. In Brussels, the question of who claimed a stake in determining what musical life was and how it worked demands an analysis of the network of concert organizers, performers, composers, critics, and musicologists in the city. I show here that Le Bœuf, Collaer, de Thoran, and Elisabeth formed the core of this network by claiming control over the largest slice of the city's musical life.

³²Clifford Geertz's concept of thick description comes into play in my work. See, for instance, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 2000, 3–30).

I have limited my research to the art music scene in Brussels. Collaer, Le Bœuf, de Thoran, and Elisabeth used varying methods to present the most attractive image of their respective musical spaces, creating a network—or scene—“for exchange, interaction and instruction” within the larger structure of the city’s cultural, intellectual, and political identity.³³ Not only were performances of new music happening throughout the city—in public and in private spaces—but the press and the actors in this scene celebrated and recorded these musical events so that both the participants in the scene and those outside the community of musicians, critics, and music lovers could follow what was happening in their city to make it unique.³⁴ This system, however, existed next to a thriving popular music scene in the city, which ran largely parallel to the network that controlled the city’s activities in the realm of art music.³⁵

My project does not extend to a discussion of the vibrant musical activities in other Belgian cities. Musicians, their repertoire, and musical discourse circulated between Brussels and other major urban centers—especially Antwerp, Ghent and Liège. Antwerp boasted two opera

³³Will Straw establishes a useful concept of *scene* in “Cultural Scenes,” *Loisir et société/ Society and Leisure* 27, no. 2 (Autumn 2004): 411–22. He defines his understanding of the concept as a useful academic category in flexible terms that change depending on its usage: “*Scene* designates particular clusters of social and cultural activity without specifying the nature of the boundaries which circumscribe them. Scenes may be distinguished according to their location [...], the genre of cultural production which gives them coherence (a musical style, for example, as in references to the electroclash scene) or the loosely defined social activity around which they take shape (as with urban outdoor chess-playing scenes). *Scene* invites us to map the territory of the city in new ways while, at the same time, designating certain kinds of activity whose relationship to territory is not easily asserted” (412). Straw’s study is particularly thought provoking because he considers the fluidity of the idea of “scene,” especially in terms of determining what activities should be in the foreground of a study and what activities form the backdrop. See also Alan Blum, *The Imaginative Structure of the City* (Montreal: McGill Queen’s University Press, 2003), 165–67.

³⁴Straw writes of the theatricality of the 1970s disco culture in Montreal using these terms, showing how the processes involved in broadcasting the happenings in a fringe scene became important to the city’s larger cultural identity (“Cultural Scenes,” 418).

³⁵Research into popular music in Brussels at the turn of the twentieth century is flourishing among Belgian scholars. See Daniel Berger et al., *L’heure bleue: la vie nocturne à Bruxelles de 1830 à 1940* (Brussels: Crédit Communal, 1987). There are several on-going projects that examine popular music, boulevard entertainment, jazz clubs, café-concerts, and street music in the city, including the collaborative study group, “Culture, Mobilité, Territoire” at the Université Libre de Bruxelles,” which explores the links between culture and mobility in Brussels’s metropolitan identity from the eighteenth through the twenty-first centuries (<http://micmarc.ulb.ac.be/>).

companies, as well as the Société Royale des Nouveaux Concerts, directed by Henri Fester (1849–1939), which brought guest conductors and soloists including Gustav Mahler, Sergei Prokofiev, and Sergei Rachmaninoff to the city.³⁶ Antwerp was also home to the Chorale Caecilia, an amateur choir directed by Louis de Vocht, that performed in professional concerts throughout Europe, including the 1930 European premiere of Igor Stravinsky's *Symphonie de Psaumes* in Brussels. Ghent was home to the Concerts d'Hiver and an opera house, among others. Liège continued to enjoy its reputation as the birthplace of André Ernest Modeste Grétry and César Franck. The Walloon city was the home of the influential school of violin playing that produced Henri Vieuxtemps, Eugène Ysaÿe, and many others. Liège also had its own opera company. Concert societies in Belgian cities often shared concert expenses, and the short travel distance between the cities and the dense Belgian railroad network allowed for visiting artists in Brussels to travel to the provincial cities easily.

My inquiry into Brussels's musical culture challenges the equation of an identifiable national compositional style with a national musical culture. Related to this, I also challenge the notion that the musical life of a city or nation served to showcase the work of its composers. In Belgium, the factions of young and established composers, and the struggles that Belgian composers had—or claimed to have—to get their works performed in Brussels, precluded a cohesive vision of Belgian compositional style. As a result, in order to study the city's musical life we must look beyond the compositional practices. The musical identity of the city in the interwar period, determined by Le Bœuf, Collaer, de Thoran, and Elisabeth's work, relied on the performances of new music by foreign composers. These performances, however, did not have to

³⁶Festers was also a commissioner of the Koninklijk Conservatorium (the Royal Conservatory) in Antwerp, founder of the city's Bach Society, and founding member of the Toonkunstenaars Association.

be world premieres in order to contribute to the narrative of the city's identity as a center for new music.

The claim about the city's musical identity—namely that Brussels was a cosmopolitan urban center where audiences received new music with enthusiasm—is deceptive. A cosmopolitan outlook that embraced the broadest definition of modern music often conflicted with concerns about developing a Belgian national identity rooted in the past or even in local traditions. Le Bœuf, Collaer, de Thoran, and Elisabeth wove these strands together in their work as music organizers, patrons, and performers. In fact, for each, the claim to a modern and cosmopolitan outlook was complicated by expectations based on their respective socio-economic statuses, the financial problems of patronage, and their various links to the past.

Cosmopolitanism, Modernism, and Xenophilia

Claims for Brussels's status as a center for the performance of modern music was, and remains, bound up with its image as a cosmopolitan city. In the post-World War I landscape especially, a sense of instability, loss, and separation left space for the exploration of new ideas. As a result, a variety of modernities emerged, resisting a single ideological or aesthetic direction.³⁷ The Belgian capital's constructed identity as a center for musical modernism rested on an openness—real or imagined—to many different styles of new music from many different places. This claim

³⁷Barbara L. Kelly explains the different strands of discussion about modernism, the avant-garde, ultra-modernism, and anti-modernism in the introduction to her *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France*, citing both texts written in the 1910s and 1920s and more recent studies of modernism as a historical movement. For further discussion of the diversity of modernism in the arts and politics, see Daniel Albright, *Untwisting the Serpent: Modernism in Music, Literature, and Other Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Matei Calinescu, *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987); T.J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Carol Oja, *Making Music Modern*; Alex Ross, *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007); and Raymond Williams, *Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists* (New York: Verso, 1989).

to an inclusive mindset is inextricably linked to declarations of the city's cosmopolitanism. According to Gerard Delanty, cosmopolitanism is a distinctly modern condition. The cosmopolitan imagination—the process by which self-understanding is reevaluated and reframed in the face of increasing connections with international and global networks—depends on the modern sense of contingency and impermanence. A truly cosmopolitan attitude, thus takes the conditions of mobility, hybridity, plurality, and diversity into account, and in response to these conditions, produces an ongoing process of self-reflection and self-problematization.³⁸

The connection between modernism and cosmopolitanism leads back to the contradictory views of Brussels as at the center or at the periphery of European art. The tension between the global and the local is a key element in a cosmopolitan understanding of the world. How the local space of Brussels fit into global networks was a question whose answer relied on the varying understandings of the function of new music in the city, on the one hand, and the function of the city's new music scene in an international context, on the other. Throughout the interwar years, the main actors in the musical life of the city were intensely aware of the relationship between local interests and international fashions in music. The conflicting accounts of Brussels, from the Belgian perspective, were the result of the process of self-reflection that Delanty insists is so important to the cosmopolitan imagination. In the context of musical life in interwar Brussels, a cosmopolitan attitude looked outward, beyond the Belgian borders, in order to situate the Belgian capital—though not necessarily Belgium—in relation to the rest of Europe.

³⁸Gerard Delanty, *The Cosmopolitan Imagination: The Renewal of Critical Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 71–72. Delanty's conception of the cosmopolitan imagination is particularly useful in considerations of the cultural landscape of post-World War I Europe. As Akira Iriye discusses in *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), in response to the perceived dangers of nationalism intellectuals and artists in the 1920s looked for ways to establish lasting international understanding through various means of cultural exchange. Iriye demonstrates the importance of self-reflection in these exchanges. For a consideration of a multiplicity of cosmopolitanisms that resembles discussions of multiple modernisms, see Carol A. Breckenridge, Seldon Pollack, Homi K. Bhabha, and Dipesh Chakrabarty, eds., *Cosmopolitanism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

Le Bœuf, Collaer, de Thoran, and Elisabeth each enjoyed privileged social positions that allowed them to explore the cultural landscape of post-war Europe. Travel, correspondence, and interpersonal connections exposed them to a wide variety of musical ideologies and styles. The networks they constructed and sustained transcended national borders. Each had a different set of relationships, from which varying interpretations of Brussels as a cosmopolitan and modern city emerged.

The variety of musical styles and works that each patron presented as modern reflects the wide range of their cosmopolitan attitudes. Works as diverse as Franz Schubert's 1823 opera *Fierabras*, Igor Stravinsky's 1923 ballet *Les Noces*, and Darius Milhaud's post-war chamber pieces received billing as "musique contemporaine," "musique moderne," or "musique vivante." Such general categories allowed for the broadest understanding of what it meant for music to be "modern" in Brussels. With some exceptions—including the Schubert opera—however, these terms applied generally to music written either by living composers or in recent memory. Belgian tastes tended to favor new Franco-Russian styles, informed heavily by the connections between Brussels and Paris. German, Spanish, and Scandinavian composers (and even the occasional British and American composer) received attention in Brussels for the quality of their music. This attention came from both concert organizers and from the press. For this reason, my research is as much a study of music reception as it is a history of organizations. The wide-ranging programming made Brussels a crossroads for musical modernism, bringing together a variety of national styles and modernist views.

Native Belgian composers and some Belgian critics protested the persistent internationalism of programming in Brussels. In 1925, Gaston Knosp, for instance, wrote an

article disparaging the xenophilia that was running rampant among those who organized concerts:

À l'égard de beaucoup d'étrangers, [...] règne un fâcheux protectionnisme et dont les coupables se vantent non sans ostentation comme pour dire: « Hein! ça vous ennuie; eh bien, nous continuerons. À protéger nos belges, il n'y a rien à gagner, tandis que les faveurs que nous octroyons aux étrangers font parler de nous au dehors, » etc., etc. Quel enchantement pour ces mauvais mécènes de voir leurs noms acclamés à Paris, Berlin, Londres, Petrograd [...] et même en Suisse, comme protecteurs ou lanceurs de telle œuvre ou de tel artiste venus se retaper chez nous.³⁹

The story of the Belgian composers who struggled to get their works heard weaves in and out of each of my chapters. It reveals the kinds of tensions that arose as a result of cosmopolitan outlooks, cultural transfer and mobility, and hybridity. Ulrich Beck maintains that nationalism and cosmopolitanism work together: “Cosmopolitan realism does not negate nationalism but presupposes it and transforms it into a cosmopolitan nationalism. Without the stabilizing factors that nationalism provides in dealing with difference, cosmopolitanism is in danger of losing itself in a philosophical never-never land.”⁴⁰ The “stabilizing factors” that Beck mentions here are both spaces where cosmopolitanism can be anchored to a local culture and places where conflict and tension between the local and the universal can arise. Le Bœuf, Collaer, de Thoran, and Elisabeth each confronted the question of supporting new music by Belgian composers using different tactics. A philosophical paradox that positioned music as being simultaneously a representation of national identities and a universal ideal came into play in their respective musical programs. For Le Bœuf, Collaer, Elisabeth, and de Thoran, the questions of positioning Brussels as an international and cosmopolitan center and of supporting Belgian composers were both important, and shaped their work to varying degrees and at different moments.

³⁹Gaston Knosp, “Xénophilie,” *La Revue musicale belge* 1, no. 2 (June 1925): 4.

⁴⁰Ulrich Beck, *The Cosmopolitan Vision* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 49.

Methodology and State of Research

This project is prosopographic, using the combination of several biographies to analyze a broader phenomenon that would be impossible to examine through a single life story. My focus shifts among four individuals, all the while keeping all of them in the frame.⁴¹ My work unravels the complications inherent in discussing Brussels's musical identity between the wars by following four intertwined paths that lead through the history of culture in the city: that of Le Bœuf, Collaer, de Thoran, and Elisabeth. It is impossible to credit any one of these individuals as the sole, or even the dominant, instigator or the arbiter of new music to Brussels. Their lives intersected in public and private spaces across the city, and their identities were inextricably connected to that of the city. They were the anchors of a widespread cultural and social network, and as such, their stories connect the members of the cultural, intellectual, and social elite who participated in Brussels's musical life. For example, Adolphe Max, the mayor of Brussels from 1909 until 1939, was involved in all the major music organizations of the city in some capacity; Lucien Solvay, Ernest and Hermann Closson, and May de Rudder were prolific music critics for Brussels's newspapers; and Charles Van den Borren, a scholar of early music, served on the boards of many musical committees and established the study of music history at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) and at the Université de Liège. The four individuals at the center of my project also collaborated regularly with the many other actors in the history of Belgian music whose biographies are not connected to a single place, such as violinist Eugène Ysaÿe or conductor Lode de Vocht.

⁴¹Robin Fleming considers the possibilities and limitations of prosopography in historical inquiry in "Writing Biography at the Edge of History," *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 (June 2009): 606–14. See also David Nasaw's consideration of the link between history and biography in his introduction to *The American Historical Review* Roundtable "Historians and Biography," *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 (June 2009): 574; and Alice Kessler-Harris's article, "Why Biography?" in the same issue (625–30). Nasaw refers to Oscar Handlin's characterization in *Truth in History* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1979) of the subject of biography as "not the complete person or the complete society, but the point at which the two interact. There the situation and the individual illuminate one another" (276).

In their own time and after their deaths, each of the four patrons received recognition for their importance to Belgian musical culture and identity from Belgian writers. Each was constantly in the public eye; both the daily press and art journals of the time offer perspectives about their work that is at best piecemeal for other organizers of musical performance in Brussels at the time. Collaer, Le Bœuf, and Elisabeth each had distinct public personas that helped shape their policies and public perception of their concerts and musical patronage.⁴² De Thoran, by contrast, was almost always linked with his work at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie (TRM), which overshadowed its director's public persona.⁴³

The difference among the treatment of these four individuals demonstrates the different ways in which aspects of the personal and professional experiences of each were privileged or muffled in the work of constructing the city's musical identity. Despite Le Bœuf and Collaer's importance as public figures in Brussels, comprehensive biographies of these two were written neither during their lifetimes, nor after their deaths. Articles about Collaer exist, with most focusing on his work with the Concerts Pro Arte. Furthermore, Robert Wangermée published his correspondence with international musicians in 1996, seven years after Collaer's death.⁴⁴ Collaer

⁴²My work draws from a wide variety of patronage studies, especially those that focus on the turn of the twentieth century: Cyrilla Barr, *Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge: American Patron of Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1998); Cyrilla Barr and Ralph P. Locke, eds., *Women Patrons and Activists in American Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Jeanice Brooks, "Nadia Boulanger and the Salon of the Princesse de Polignac," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 46, no. 3 (1993): 415–68; Myriam Chimènes, *Mécènes et musiciens: du salon au concert à Paris sous la IIIe République* (Paris: Fayard, 2004); Sylvia Kahan, *In Search of New Scales: Prince Edmond de Polignac, Octatonic Explorer* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2009); and Sylvia Kahan, *Music's Modern Muse: A Life of Winnaretta Signer, Princesse de Polignac* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003).

⁴³Jochen Hellbeck discusses the importance of interrogating how and why sources for biographies were produced, as well as circumstances that created periods of heightened biographical consciousness in "Galaxy of Black Stars: The Power of Soviet Biography," *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 3 (June 2009): 615.

⁴⁴Paul Collaer, *Correspondence avec amis musiciens*, ed. Robert Wangermée (Sprimont: Pierre Mardaga, 1996). Wangermée's articles include: "Paul Collaer, les Concerts Pro Arte et la musique du XXe siècle," *Bulletin de la Classe des Beaux-Arts* 6, no. 2 (1991): 11–39; a chapter devoted to Collaer in *La musique belge contemporaine* (Brussels: Renaissance du Livre, 1959); and "Paul Collaer et la musique du 20e siècle," in *Hulde aan Paul Collaer*, ed. Gilbert Huybens (Leuven: Cera/Abb, 1986), 21–23. Valérie Dufour discusses Collaer's work supporting

also appears as a marginal figure in autobiographies and biographies of French composers, as well histories of Parisian musical life.⁴⁵ Le Bœuf's biography has only been written in the most general terms, in the flood of obituaries and memorials written immediately after his death, or as part of histories of musical institutions.⁴⁶ There are even fewer biographical sources about de Thoran.⁴⁷ By contrast, article- and book-length biographies about Elisabeth exist in many languages. As a member of the royal family who took on a very public role, Elisabeth was a subject of particular public fascination.⁴⁸

Stravinsky's music in "Paul Collaer et Igor Strawinsky: Lettres inédits au compositeur," *Revue belge de musicologie/ Belgisch tijdschrift voor muzikwetenschap* 56 (2002): 99–116. See also her *Strawinsky à Bruxelles, 1920–1960* (Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, 2003); and *Strawinsky et ses exégètes (1910–1940)* (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2006). Jean-Pierre Muller associates Collaer's biography with that of Octave Maus in *Paul Collaer et Octave Maus*.

⁴⁵Collaer appears, for instance, in Kelly, *Music and Ultra-Modernism in France*; Darius Milhaud, *Notes sans musique*, rev. ed. (Paris: René Julliard, 1949).

⁴⁶See especially Malou Haine, "Une amitié franco-belge: Henry Le Bœuf, Henry Prunières et la naissance de *La Revue musicale*," in *Henry Prunières, un musicologue engagé de l'entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Myrian Chimènes, Florence Gétreau, and Catherine Massip (Paris: Société Française Musicologie, forthcoming); the short biography of Le Bœuf in Ginette Kurgan van Hentenryk, *Dictionnaire des patrons en Belgique: Les Hommes, les entreprises, les réseaux* (Brussels: De Bœck Université, 1996); Valérie Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts: la création d'un haut lieu de culture à Bruxelles (1928–1945)* (Brussels: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2000); Valérie Montens, "Henry Le Bœuf, animateur de la vie musicale bruxelloise durant l'entre-deux-guerres," *Revue belge de musicologie/ Belgisch tijdschrift voor muzikwetenschap* 56 (2002): 117–29; Valérie Montens, "Le Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles: Henry Le Bœuf et la création du premier centre culturel de Belgique (1923–1958)," Ph.D. diss, Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1999.

⁴⁷Gilles Remy, "Corneil de Thoran (1881–1953). La plus longue carrière de chef d'orchestre et de directeur à la Monnaie," in *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers de GRAM, 2010), 278–313.

⁴⁸See, for instance, Georges-Henri Dumont, *Elisabeth de Belgique, ou les défis d'une reine* (Paris: Fayard, 1986); Willem Erauw, "Konigen Elisabeth. Over pacifisme, pantheïsme en de passie voor muziek," Ph.D. diss, University of Ghent, 1995; Marie-José, *Albert et Elisabeth: mes parents* (Brussels: Le Cri, 2000); Elisabeth is also a prominent figure in biographies of Albert I, including Jacques Willequet, *Albert I^{er}, roi des Belges: un portrait politique et humain* (Paris: J.-P. Delarge, 1979); and Laurence van Ypersele, *Le Roi Albert: histoire d'un mythe* (Ottignies: Quorum, 1995).

This dissertation offers the first large-scale English-language study of the music in Brussels between the World Wars.⁴⁹ It contributes to the recent international discussions among Belgian, French, Canadian, and American scholars that are expanding research about music in Belgium and its importance to the history of music in the twentieth century.⁵⁰ Several factors have contributed to the scarcity of musicological work on the Belgian capital in English: the city's status both at the center and at the periphery of European musical life presents challenges in scholarly engagement with Brussels; music is often overshadowed by the visual arts because Belgian artists of the interwar years enjoyed international acclaim (particularly René Magritte and James Ensor); and finally Paul Collaer's legacy among his colleagues and students who taught and continue to teach at universities in Belgium has limited the critical distance in scholarship about Collaer and his contemporaries and kept the focus on a single figure.

My sources include a wide variety of evidence of musical activities in Brussels and the ways in which these activities translated into conceptions of musical culture and musical identity. I build on newly uncovered archival materials and I also reexamine sources that have already been explored in studies on the TRM and the PBA. The Fonds Henry Le Bœuf, which is the basis for Chapter 1, for instance, is newly accessible to the public at the KBR, while Valérie Montens used the Archives de la Société Philharmonique extensively in her 2002 study of the Palais des Beaux-Arts. Archives in Brussels offer a rich cache of personal correspondence, notes, and press clippings that Collaer, Le Bœuf, and Elisabeth collected during the interwar years. Sources about and by de Thoran are more limited, and most of my evidence comes from the

⁴⁹ Elaine Brody's *Paris: The Musical Kaleidoscope, 1870–1925* (New York: George Braziller) includes a chapter on Octave Maus and Les XX. The chapter, tucked into a book about Paris, does not extend past 1914 and treats the city's musical life strictly as a satellite to the French capital.

⁵⁰The 2001 issue of *Revue belge de musicologie/ Belgisch tijdschrift voor muzikwetenschap* was dedicated to musical life in Brussels from the fifteenth century through the twentieth.

press and official documents concerning his tenure as director. My work relies heavily on the Belgian and foreign press of the time, including weekly and monthly artistic journals such as *L'Eventail*, *Les Beaux-Arts*, and *Les Cahiers de Belgique*, Belgian dailies such as *Le Soir*, *L'Indépendance Belge*, and *Le Peuple*. The differences among the kinds of music journalism that appear in these journals, and the kinds of music that each paper covered illustrates political and aesthetic associations that drove public discussion about what music in Brussels was and should have been.

This study follows roughly chronological lines, moving from the 1920s through the 1930s. Chapter 1 addresses Henry Le Bœuf's directorship on the Concerts Populaires in the 1920s. I argue that Le Bœuf relied heavily on nineteenth-century structures and sensibilities in his work to revive the concert series. This chapter also traces the beginnings of Le Bœuf's ambitious project to centralize musical life in the city under a single administration. Chapter 2 reexamines Paul Collaer's well-established reputation as the central figure in Brussels. I contend that Collaer was, in effect, an outsider in Brussels. Among his colleagues, he was the one most oriented toward Parisian musical life. In Brussels, he maintained a distance from other musical organizations, and his socio-economic status excluded him from the fashionable meetings at the royal court. This chapter presents Collaer as one of many patrons who shaped musical life in Brussels, rather than the dominant figure that Robert Wangermée often constructs in his writing. Chapter 3 considers the uneasy relationship between the past and the present at the TRM under the directorship of Corneil de Thoran and his collaborators. From the conception of a museum celebrating the TRM's past, to the popularity of operas using exotic settings and styles, to the French neoclassical operas, the opera company negotiated a space in the city that was at once vital to the nation's identity and quickly shrinking with the rise of new musical styles and new

spaces for performance in the city. Chapter 4 delves into the royal patronage of Queen Elisabeth of the Belgians. I trace a trajectory in her style of patronage, from the traditional nineteenth-century role of salonière and official representative of the Belgian nation to the head of a twentieth-century music organization, the Fondation Musicale Reine Elisabeth. I take into account the queen's personal taste, her responsibilities as a monarch, and her status as a German by birth. Chapter 5 returns to Henry Le Bœuf, discussing his aspirations to centralize music in Brussels under the umbrella of the Société Philharmonique. I show the importance of Le Bœuf's dynamic personality and his network of collaborators to the PBA, the Société Philharmonique, and the city. I conclude with an epilogue that considers the circumstances surrounding the planning and execution of the Soirées de Bruxelles in 1936. The story of this short-lived festival illustrates the impact of changing interpersonal dynamics, as well as the growing importance of radio in shaping Belgian musical life, and particularly in realizing aspirations to organize performances of the newest music.

CHAPTER 1: HENRY LE BŒUF, KINGPIN OF NEW MUSIC, 1919–1928

Un dilettante?

Mieux que cela. [...] [L]e dilettante est celui qui jouit de l'art simplement, sans lui donner un effort personnel. Le Bœuf lui a fourni toujours son apport. [...] Il a fait de la critique dans les grands journaux, il a publié des études sur la musique classique et sur la musique nouvelle, il a fait des conférences, il est devenu la cheville ouvrière de cette grande œuvre que sont les Concerts Populaires; il est de tous les groupements qui suscitent ou appuient les manifestations d'art [...]

Non, ce n'est pas un dilettante. C'est un artiste. Ce financier si calme, si bourgeois, si correct est animé de la noble flamme. Ses idées, ses goûts, parfois nous choquent par quelque chose d'excessif. Il a le droit d'être excessif et de se tromper; l'art le possède et pour se donner à lui il a dédoublé sa vie et son labeur.¹

In October 1922, *L'Eventail* featured on its front page a portrait of Henry Le Bœuf (1874–1935), the financier, amateur pianist, and administrative director of the Concerts Populaires. Although he was an amateur musician, Le Bœuf established himself as the “cheville ouvrière” (the kingpin) of the Concerts Populaires after only two seasons. As such, his vision of the organization of Brussels's musical life, and particularly new music's place in that order, came to dominate the capital city's cultural structure.

Le Bœuf's legacy is tied to the post-World War I construction of Belgian musical identity and the workings of Brussels's cultural life, which relied heavily on the narrative of a local culture that had to be reinvented after four years of complete isolation during the German occupation. Yet—as I argue in this chapter—Le Bœuf, who was steeped in nineteenth-century bourgeois sensibilities and intellectual traditions, continued to rely on pre-war tradition and patterns of organization. Furthermore, the label “kingpin” in *L'Eventail*'s article implies a direct

¹“Nos Contemporains. Henri[sic] Le Boeuf,” *L'Eventail*, 22 October 1922.

and unproblematic connection between Le Bœuf and the broader aspirations to make Brussels—and through it, Belgium—a center of new international music. Such a connection, however, is not as straightforward as the article implies. Le Bœuf’s administrative work proved to be guided by his personal musical taste, which included his interest in new music by both foreign and native composers, as well as his vision to build an audience in the Belgian capital for symphonic repertoire. The goal of making new music a sustainable product for paying audiences continued to challenge Le Bœuf and his organizations throughout the interwar period. They were compelled to develop strategies that allowed space for new music without alienating the limited contingent of concertgoers in Brussels.

This chapter focuses on four defining moments for the Concerts Populaires under Le Bœuf’s direction: his appointment as director of the organization in 1919; the 1921 referendum on the question of reintroducing Wagner to the Concerts Populaires programs; the January 1923 concert, featuring Sergei Prokofiev’s *Suite Scythe*, which persisted in the city’s memory as a defining moment for its status as a center for new music; and the musicians’ strike during the 1923–24 season, which challenged the established order that Le Bœuf and his contemporaries had established through their concert organizations. By delving into the implications of these four moments for both the Concerts Populaires and for Brussels, my discussion of the Concerts Populaires focuses on how Le Bœuf’s idiosyncratic construction of the mission of the Concerts Populaires became the dominant view of the city’s musical life—one which could balance the old and the new, the foreign and the native effortlessly. For Le Bœuf, music functioned as a tool to form a post-war image of Brussels that referred at once to the city’s nineteenth-century legacy and to visions of the city’s future.

The Concerts Populaires and Symphonic Music in Brussels before World War I

In February 1919, Henry Le Bœuf was elected by a unanimous vote as the new director of the Concerts Populaires.² He inherited a society that was an established part of the city's musical life. When war broke out in 1914, the Concerts Populaires was the largest and longest-running independent concert series in Brussels. Joseph Dupont, who directed the concerts from 1873 until his death in 1899, made the works of Wagner, Richard Strauss, and Russian composers of the nineteenth century (especially The Mighty Handful) staples of the repertoire of the series.³ Under Dupont, the Concerts Populaires invited celebrities of the late nineteenth century to Brussels, both performers and composers. These included such guest directors such as Hans Richter, Felix Mottl, and Hermann Levi.⁴

This programming contrasted sharply with those of the Concerts du Conservatoire. François-Auguste Gevaert, director of series from 1871 until 1908, conceived of the series as a “musée sonore.”⁵ The Concerts Populaires and the Concerts du Conservatoire had different

²Ernest Closson, “Henry Le Bœuf,” *Le Flambeau*, 18, no. 2 (February 1935): 130.

³For more on concert performances in Brussels before World War I, see, for instance, Erik Baeck, “Richard Strauss in Brussel,” *Revue belge de musicologie/ Belgisch tijdschrift voor muziekwetenschap* 55 (2001): 303–318; Carlo Bronne, *La Comtesse de Mercy Argenteau*, 2nd ed. (Liège: Solédi, 1945); Malou Haine, Hugo Rodriguez, and Itzana Dobbelaere, “La Belgique à l’heure russe,” in *Bruxelles, convergence des arts, 1880–1914*, ed. Malou Haine and Denis Laoureux, with Sandrine Thieffry (Paris: Vrin, 2013), 251–270; Maurice Kufferath, *Concerts Populaires* (Brussels: Monnom, 1898); and Henri Vanhulst, “Les sociétés de concerts Bruxelloises et Wagner (1853–1883),” in *La Monnaie wagnérienne*, ed. Manuel Couvreur (Brussels: Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1998), 25–39. For a broader perspective of musical societies in the nineteenth century, see Hans Erich Bödeker and Patrice Velt, eds., *Les sociétés de musique en Europe 1700–1920: structures, pratiques musicales, sociabilités* (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2007).

⁴Baeck, “Richard Strauss in Brussel,” 303.

⁵Vanhulst, “Les sociétés de concerts,” 31. François-Auguste Gevaert used the phrase “musée sonore” in his “Rapport sur l’organisation des concerts,” *Annuaire du Conservatoire* 1 (1877): 98. I discuss the concept of a musical museum in more depth in chapter 3. For more on the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles and the Concerts du Conservatoire in the nineteenth century, see Edouard Gregoir, *L’Art musical en Belgique sous les règnes de Léopold I^{er} & Léopold II, Rois des Belges, 1830–1880* (Brussels: Schott Frères, 1879); Jacques Leduc, *Le Conservatoire Royal de Musique de Bruxelles*, 2nd ed. (Brussels: Cebedem, 1971); Robert Wangermée, *François-Joseph Fétis, musicologue et compositeur. Contribution à l’étude du goût musical au XIX^e siècle* (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1951).

agendas, with two repertoires that complemented each other. Maurice Kufferath—champion of new music in Brussels— described the difference between the two concert series in *Le Guide musical* in 1879:

Les Concerts Populaires, c'est l'art actuel, vivant, entraînant, intense, passionné, celui qui remue et qui vous élance de ses séductions.

Le Conservatoire est un temple où il y a des dieux, des pontifes, des adorateurs et pas de croyants. C'est la discipline et le dogme.⁶

In drawing this distinction, Kufferath's language indicates the value he placed on new music above traditional programming. Such an attitude indicates the nineteenth-century roots of the aspirations to establish Brussels as a center for new music during the interwar period.

Such complementary programming, however, was not the rule. In 1887, cellist and conductor Franz Servais (1847–1901) founded the Concerts d'Hiver. Modeled after Charles Lamoureux's Société des Nouveaux Concerts in Paris, Servais conceived of a series that would focus on early music, modern works, and Belgian composers. In practice, however, the only Belgian works that appeared on his programs were Servais's own compositions, and the programs generally leaned heavily toward Beethoven and late nineteenth-century music.⁷ The similarities between Servais's project and that of the established Concerts Populaires led the Brussels press to declare a “querelle de chefs d'orchestre” (*L'Art moderne*) and a “guerre musicale ouverte” (*Le Guide musical*). Critics framed the rivalry as a positive sign of the city's

⁶Maurice Kufferath, *Le Guide musical*, 18 December 1879. Quoted in Vanhulst, “Les sociétés de concerts,” 32. By 1884, Gevaert included Wagner in his Concerts du Conservatoire, an indication of the composer's established place in standard concert repertoire.

⁷Servais, a student of Franz Liszt, held his concerts at the Éden-Théâtre in Etterbeek, away from the city center, rather than at the Salle du Conservatoire or the auditorium of the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. Just as Lamoureux did, Servais provided his audiences with free programs with explanatory notes about the historical context of the works and some explanation of their musical structures. Malou Haine, “Les Concerts d'Hiver du chef d'orchestre Franz Servais à Bruxelles (1887–1889),” *Revue belge de musicologie/ Belgisch tijdschrift voor muzikwetenschap* 55 (2001): 256–63.

emerging musical culture.⁸ In reality, the rivalry pitted the two organizations against each other in a competition for subscribers, and Servais's concerts ended after the second season.⁹

Eugène Ysaÿe and Maurice Kufferath's new concert series, created in 1895, fared better than Servais's project, continuing uninterrupted until the outbreak of World War I. Ysaÿe, who had made his name as a violinist and conductor in Paris, envisioned an organization that would be the symphonic equivalent of the chamber music concerts offered by Les XX and La Libre Esthétique. His international contacts ensured an impressive array of soloists and premieres, including Vincent d'Indy conducting his *Istar* during the 1886–87 season, Ferruccio Busoni as a soloist in November 1901, and Edward Elgar conducting his First Symphony in 1911.¹⁰ Despite the success of Ysaÿe's series, critics in Brussels continued to complain that there were simply too many concerts for the small community of music lovers who were likely to attend art music concerts.

After World War I, such concerns resurfaced, as Le Bœuf's administration faced similar rivalries, and musicians and critics alike complained of the excessive number of concerts all marketed to the same audiences. Le Bœuf's strategies to confront these concerns emerged in the 1920s and shaped his policies and ambitions in the 1930s to centralize the musical life of the city in order to carve out a place for several concert societies, each with a different musical focus, under a single administrative umbrella.

⁸“Querelle de chefs d’orchestre,” *L’Art moderne* 7, no. 50 (11 December 1887): 398; *Le Guide musical*, 15 December 1887, quoted in Haine, “Les Concerts d’Hiver,” 268. See also “Petite Chronique,” *L’Art moderne* 7, no. 49 (4 December 1887): 391.

⁹Haine, “Les Concerts d’Hiver,” 270.

¹⁰Michel Stockhem, *Eugène Ysaÿe et la musique de chambre* (Liège: Mardaga, 1990), 25–43. Octave Maus was not directly involved in the Concerts Ysaÿe, but did encourage Ysaÿe in creating the new series. Robert Wangermée, “La vie musicale à Bruxelles autour du Théâtre de la Monnaie,” in *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 10.

Henry Le Bœuf before 1918

In the decades before the war, Le Bœuf immersed himself in the same intellectual atmosphere that produced the Concerts Populaires. He espoused socialist values, Wagnerian aesthetics, and symbolist literature, among many other current intellectual trends. When Le Bœuf entered the Université Libre de Bruxelles in 1891 as a seventeen-year-old student of the law, he joined a community of young people who looked both for a lively intellectual life and for the promise of employment.¹¹ In addition to his studies, Le Bœuf began to write student reviews under the pen name Henry Lesbroussart. His literary reviews appeared in the *Revue rouge*, founded in 1892, and in the *Revue universitaire*, published by the Cercle Universitaire to chronicle lectures and the intellectual life at Belgian universities.¹²

Le Bœuf graduated with a doctorate in law in 1898, but instead of pursuing a career in law, he accepted a position at the Empain financial group.¹³ In 1900, he married Louise Thys, daughter of General Albert Thys (1849–1915).¹⁴ Le Bœuf left Empain after his marriage to work

¹¹Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts: la création d'un haut lieu de culture à Bruxelles (1928–1945)* (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles 2000), 13. See also Valérie Montens, "Henry Le Bœuf, animateur de la vie musicale bruxelloise durant l'entre-deux-guerres," *Revue belge de musicologie/ Belgisch tijdschrift voor muziekwetenschap* 56 (2002): 117–29.

¹²Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 15–19.

¹³Belgian banks maintained a key role in the Belgian economy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly through their interests in colonial enterprises in Africa. Organizations such as the Société Générale de Belgique provided investment loans to industrialists and also bought shares in industrial ventures. For more on the relationships between banks and industry in Belgium, see Guy Vanthemsche, "State, Banks and Industry in Belgium and the Netherlands, 1919–1939," in *The Role of Banks in the Interwar Economy*, eds., Harold James, Håkan Lindgren, and Alice Teichova (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 104–21. The Empain Group, founded by Edouard Empain, which included the Compagnie des Chemins de Fer du Congo Supérieur aux Grands Lacs Africains, was one of many concessionary companies founded in the early twentieth century. For more on these companies and their relationships with King Leopold II, see Guy Vanthemsche, *Belgium and the Congo, 1885–1980*, trans. Alice Cameron and Stephen Windross, rev. Kate Connelley (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 148–49, 180–86.

¹⁴Thys served as a key administrator in Léopold II's colonial enterprises, particularly the construction of the vital railway between Matadi and Léopoldville. He was instrumental in the organization and administration of the Compagnie du Congo pour le Commerce et l'Industrie, visiting Africa several times, raising funding in Belgium for construction projects in the Congo. He founded the Banque d'Outremer, which expanded Belgian financial interest

for the Banque d'Outremer, where he served as the president or administrator of several colonial and maritime societies. In 1910, his work with the Banque d'Outremer and the Etablissements Deckers, a construction and railroad company, brought him into contact with the wealthy financier and patron of the arts, Adolphe Stoclet. A year later, Le Bœuf was named the administrator of the Banque d'Outremer. His various banking positions helped him amass a large personal fortune, which he would use after the war to support various musical endeavors—his own and those of his contemporaries.

Le Bœuf's career in the financial sector and its intersection with musical life in Brussels points to the rarely acknowledged fact that the flourishing of musical culture in Brussels, with its reception of foreign celebrities and the nation's claim to artistic sophistication, rested on the brutal exploitation of the Congo's resources and people. Although all relationships between metropolises and their colonies were based on an uneven balance of power, the case of the Belgian presence in Africa was particularly abusive. Concession companies mined the people and the land for profit, relying on military force, and offering very little to the populations that suffered under such tactics. The discourse in the musical and daily press—as well as musicological engagement with the period of Belgian colonial rule—have rendered this connection invisible through many tactics. Yet Le Bœuf, Stoclet, Thys, and other lions of Belgian industry and finance wielded influence over the arts in Brussels at the turn of the twentieth century because of the wealth and status they gained from their work in the Congo. As the administrator of the Banque d'Outremer—one of the key institutions of Belgian imperialism—Le Bœuf was at the

beyond the Congo, to other territories in Africa, to China, and to Canada. Despite his work for the king in the 1890s, Thys supported decentralization and free trade, and opposed monopolies, forced labor, and the creation of the *Domaine de la Couronne*. For more on Thys, see Pierre Kauch's article in *Biographie Nationale*, vol. 31 (Brussels: Établissements Émile Bruylant, 1961), 688–96. For more on Belgian imperialism in Africa and its financial, historical, and humanitarian impact, see Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998).

center of this colonial machine. In all his dealings with the musical life in Brussels, however, he never allowed the source of his wealth intrude in his artistic and educational endeavors.

As a counterpoint to his busy professional ventures, Le Bœuf's involvement in the musical and intellectual life in Belgium intensified after 1900. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Le Bœuf was a member of every major intellectual and cultural organization in the city, where he participated in the most important social, political, cultural, and aesthetic discussions of the time. It was not until after the war, however, that his name was associated predominantly with a single cultural institution where he had ultimate control over policy, programming, and politics. Le Bœuf was an accomplished amateur pianist, occasionally accompanying soloists at concerts offered by La Libre Esthétique (under his penname, Henry Lesbroussart).¹⁵ He became a member of the prestigious Cercle Artistique et Littéraire de Bruxelles.¹⁶ The group's headquarters, the Vauxhall on Rue de la Loi, served as a meeting place where leaders of the political, financial, cultural, and artistic life of the city gathered for chamber music concerts, expositions, and conferences. Adolphe Max (1869–1939), the mayor of Brussels, and Paul Lambotte, the future director of the Palais des Beaux-Arts, were among the members of the circle before the outbreak of World War I. Le Bœuf served on the administrative council with Max and Lambotte from 1907 to 1908, which probably laid the groundwork for their future collaboration on the Palais des Beaux-Arts in the late 1920s (see chapter 5). Le Bœuf also

¹⁵Ch. V., "Le quatrième concert de la Libre Esthétique," *L'Art moderne* 34, no. 14 (5 April 1914): 107. Le Bœuf accompanied the Russian mezzo-soprano Mlle E. Fonariova at the 31 March 1914 concert, the last offered by La Libre Esthétique.

¹⁶Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 35–6. The club, founded in 1848, continues its activities today as the Cercle Royal Gaulois Artistique et Littéraire. In 1911, the Cercle Artistique et Littéraire merged with the Cercle Gaulois. A 1929 copy of the statutes of the society described the goals of the group: to be a meeting place for "amis des arts et lettres et pour les notabilités artistiques, littéraires et scientifiques du pays et de l'étranger," to support the arts and literature, and to provide its members with access to artistic publications. Pamphlet, dated 20 April 1929. Fonds Fauconnier, Archives de la Ville de Bruxelles (AVB), Box 71.

became a member of the Cercle Gaulois in 1912, a group which counted Pierre Bautier, director of the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Baron Victor Buffin de Chosal, the Bankers Emile Francqui and Louis Camu, Count Henry Carton de Wiart, among many others, as members. Le Bœuf was also elected to Edmond Picard's Libre Académie de Belgique, which included the musicians Ysaÿe, Kufferath, Desiré Defauw, Charles Van den Borren, Victor Vreuls, Georges Pitsch, Emile Bosquet, Henry Carton de Wiart, Jules Destrée, and Max Hallet as members.¹⁷ Each of these people played a variety of roles in the machinery of post-war musical life and the articulation of a unified musical culture in Brussels. Le Bœuf's interactions and collaborations with these people were crucial to his centralization of the concert societies in the city.

Le Bœuf was also a prolific music critic. Using the same penname that had appeared in the university reviews of the 1890s, Henry Lesbroussart, Le Bœuf wrote 130 reviews for Octave Maus's *L'Art moderne* from 1900 until 1914, concentrating mainly on opera and symphonic concerts.¹⁸ Le Bœuf's prewar writing reveals his (largely conventional) ideas on musical aesthetics and his refined thought on the practical needs of the musical community in Brussels. His musical taste leaned towards late nineteenth-century German repertoire (especially Wagner, Strauss, and Brahms) and the new French school (Franck, Debussy, and d'Indy). Le Bœuf expressed an aversion to Italian verism, as well as Verdi, Meyerbeer, and Massenet.¹⁹ Such predilections echoed the tastes of the Belgian intellectual elite in the pre-war period, and the aesthetic questions that Le Bœuf approached in his criticism were hardly groundbreaking. Le Bœuf also harbored a romantic image of the composer as sincere artist rather than commercial

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 25. Le Bœuf's background writing literary reviews for the university press shows in his many articles about new opera productions at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, in which he concentrated on literary structures of the libretti in detail, but only offered the most general observations about the scores.

¹⁹Ibid., 26–8.

artisan. In 1908, for instance, he accused Massenet and other composers of grand opera of having “prostitué leur art, cherchant, dans leur soif fébrile de succès, les moyens les plus faciles de pénétrer l’âme des masses.”²⁰ He contrasted this seemingly mercenary approach to composition with that of Vincent d’Indy, in whose music Le Bœuf found sincerity translated into music, rather than mere fashion.

Le Bœuf’s pre-war writing anticipated the aesthetic agendas that he would adopt after the war as the director both of the Concerts Populaires and of the Société Philharmonique. These are the most illuminating sections of his criticism, and it is possible that the board of the Concerts Populaires took these views into account when they selected him for the post of director in 1919. As early as 1906, Le Bœuf had offered a critique of the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles, which throughout the nineteenth century was the leading musical organization in the city, not only educating Belgian musicians, but also organizing concerts by the conservatory orchestra, made up of both faculty and students. Le Bœuf wrote of the Conservatoire concerts: “Ces interprétations se pourraient définir de façon toujours stéréotypée: sonorité admirable, soin minutieux et intelligent dans la préparation, exacte mise au point, lors des études, de chaque groupe orchestral individuel; — déféctuosité des attaques, lourdeur compacte des ensembles, vague torpeur de l’atmosphère générale.”²¹ Most importantly, he identified the Conservatoire’s purpose of educating both its students and audiences who came to its concerts. But Le Bœuf complained of the repetitive nature of the programs, offering *Faust*, the *Siegfried Idyll*, and the overture to *Obéron* many times, leaving only a very small portion of the programming to new works, compositions by such masters as Dufay and Palestrina, and above all, the music of

²⁰Henry Lesbroussart [Henry Le Bœuf], “Les ‘Souvenirs’ de M. Vincent d’Indy,” *L’Art moderne* 29, no. 5 (2 February 1908): 36.

²¹Henry Lesbroussart [Henry Le Bœuf], “Au Conservatoire,” *L’Art moderne* 26, no. 11 (18 March 1906): 86.

Belgian-born César Franck.²² Such consideration of a concert series' designated purpose would become a vital part of Le Bœuf's conception of the place that he credited to the Concerts Populaires in post-war Brussels in relation to all of the other musical institutions that made up the urban musical fabric.

Le Bœuf was particularly concerned with how the different musical organizations in Brussels could help foster refined listening and build larger audiences for art music. In May 1914, he mused on the makeup of audiences in Brussels in a review of the Conservatoire's 1913–14 season: “Bruxelles a la réputation de beaucoup aimer la musique; mais sur les sept cent mille habitants qui composent l’agglomération, combien y en a-t-il qui assistent régulièrement aux concerts? Deux ou trois mille à peine. Cette phalange dérisoire constitue réellement le public de notre cité; elle fait les succès des auditions et entreprises régulières de grande musique.” Le Bœuf continued his observation by considering the importance of specialization of the various musical organizations in Brussels in order to ensure success for each:

Pour qu'elle accorde à plusieurs institutions une égale faveur, il est indispensable que ces organismes maintiennent entre eux la division et la spécialisation des genres. On s'abonne aux Concerts Ysaÿe pour connaître les œuvres d'avant-garde. On assiste aux Concerts Populaires pour y entendre les pages instrumentales ou théâtrales de musique moderne—XIX^e siècle—jouées par le seul orchestre permanent de Bruxelles.²³

Immediately after the war, the Concerts Populaires under Le Bœuf became known for programming avant-garde works, while the Concerts Ysaÿe tended to receive praise for

²²Henry Lesbroussart [Henry Le Bœuf], “Au Conservatoire,” *L'Art moderne* 26, no. 11 (18 March 1906): 86. The importance of “utility” as a guiding force in musical culture is a central concern in Jann Pasler's *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009). See especially chapter 1, where Pasler expands upon the history of the term, and the understanding of utility implying “underlying usefulness.”

²³Henry Lesbroussart [Henry Le Bœuf], “Les Concerts du Conservatoire,” *L'Art moderne* 34, no. 20 (17 May 1914): 155.

performances of standard nineteenth century repertoire. Although the reputations of the concert societies shifted, the equilibrium among them remained.²⁴

During World War I, Le Bœuf remained in Belgium, unlike the many musicians who fled the brutality of the German occupation by going into exile in Britain and the United States (including such leaders of musical life as Désiré Defauw, Joseph Jongen, and Eugène Ysaÿe). Though he no longer had a forum to publish his music criticism, and the structure of the concert life that he described in May 1914 was no longer functioning under the German occupation, Le Bœuf continued to involve himself in the musical life of the city as best he could. In 1915, he helped found the Dispensaire des Artistes, dedicated to helping musicians who lost their livelihoods during the German occupation.²⁵ He was also in the position to provide Queen Elisabeth, who fled Brussels in August 1914, with reports on the atmosphere in Brussels. These missives regularly included commentary on music—both the concerts and operas produced by the German occupiers, and the private and sometimes secret concerts organized by Belgians (for more on these reports, see chapter 4).

Le Bœuf's Vision for the Concerts Populaires

Writing to the novelist Georges Eckhoud, in 1923, Le Bœuf explained his reasons for accepting the directorship of the Concerts Populaires four years earlier: “J’ai accepté à la condition de pouvoir y réaliser ce qui est mon rêve de près de trente ans, c’est-à-dire faire de Bruxelles une

²⁴Pierre Janlet commented upon the shift in reputations of both series in an article for *La Revue musicale* at the beginning of the 1921–22 season. Indicating the series of five concerts of Beethoven’s music planned for the season, he wrote: “Il est possible que les Concerts Ysaÿe—sous la direction de M. F. Van der Stucken—abandonnent la tradition de modernisme qui était la leur et que les Concerts Populaires leur dérobent.” (“Belgique: Bruxelles,” *La Revue musicale* 2, no. 11 (1 October 1921): 266.

²⁵After the war, the organization became a permanent association, and was established as an *asbl* in 1922.

grande capitale musicale.”²⁶ The directorship put Le Bœuf in a position to realize his vision for the city’s musical life.

His first task after his appointment was to reestablish the administrative structure of the concert society. He insisted upon the reinstatement of the pre-war society’s statutes. Le Bœuf laid out his reasons for his concerns about the legal status of the society:

nous allons nous engager pour plus de cent mille francs de dépenses, et si une catastrophe survient, révolution ou je ne sais quoi, il y a des associés qui se défilent. Je ne veux pas courir ces risques. Ce n’est pas parce que les Concerts Populaires sont considérés par certains abonnés comme une distraction ou un passe-temps d’agrément que nous pouvons faire comme eux; je suis d’avis qu’il faut gérer cette affaire aussi sérieusement que toute autre.²⁷

After many delays, in March 1921, the new statutes were submitted for approval, and the final version was sent to members of the committee of the Concerts Populaires in December 1921. By 1923, Le Bœuf had succeeded in securing the society as an *association sans but lucratif (asbl)* under the 1921 Belgian law.²⁸ The non-profit status of the organization proved to be a vital bargaining chip for Le Bœuf and his collaborators in contract negotiations and programming decisions throughout the 1920s.

A more pressing concern for Le Bœuf after the war, however, was the elimination of questionable ties between the Concerts Populaires and Germany. Even before he was appointed director, for instance, he was concerned about the Concerts Populaires’s German librarian, Otto Junne, who had links to the German publisher Schott (whose houses in Paris and London were

²⁶ Henry Le Bœuf to Georges Eeckhoud, 7 May 1923. Quoted in Montens, *Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 55.

²⁷ Henry Le Bœuf to notary Ouverleux-Lagasse, 30 September 1920. Fonds Henry Le Bœuf (FHLB), Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique/ Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België (KBR), Mus. Ms. 4147/XXI/10/9.

²⁸ See Henry Le Bœuf to Ouverleux-Lagasse, 30 September 1920. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/XXI/10/9 and Mus. Ms. 4147/XXI/10/35–39.

expropriated during the war), Le Bœuf wrote on 8 January 1919 insisting on the necessity of replacing Junne:

Cet actif se compose d'une bibliothèque très importante, un matériel instrumental et les rayons dans lesquels les partitions et tout le matériel imprimé se trouvent classés; le gardien de cet actif serait Mr. Junne fils du représentant à Bruxelles de la Maison Schott; ce dernier est allemand et la présence d'un autre de ses fils dans l'armée ennemie rend désirable l'exclusion de la famille de toute affaire intéressant les Concerts Populaires Belges.

Je vous soumets cette question; il serait fort intéressant pour la musique nationale que les Concerts Populaires puissent se reconstituer et reprendre activité. Si la difficulté que je vous signale plus haut n'est pas résolue, on ne pourrait pas le faire franchement.²⁹

Two months later, now director of the series, Le Bœuf was still concerned. He wrote to Ernest Closson at the end of March: "Il faut tout à fait renoncer à faire renaître les C.P. avant que la question Junne ne soit définitivement résolue et l'acte de transfert des parts signé par lui [...]."³⁰

Henry Danhieux was finally named the new Régisseur-Bibliothécaire, replacing Junne in the spring of 1919.

The Junne problem delayed Le Bœuf's invitation to Edouard Brahy to become the regular conductor for the series. He explained in a letter to Ernest Closson: "Remarquez également que Brahy est apprécié autre part qu'en Belgique et que nous aurions mauvaise grâce, s'il recevait des offres de l'étranger, à nous opposer à ce qu'il les accepte. Or, à mon avis aucun engagement ne peut être pris tant que la question Junne n'est pas résolue."³¹ The Liègeois Brahy had studied both at the Conservatoire Royal de Liège and in Germany and Austria. When an injury ended his career as a cellist, he launched a conducting career—appearing in Angers, Ghent, Liège, and

²⁹Henry Le Bœuf to Ouverleaux-Lagasse, 8 January 1919. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/I/4/f.

³⁰Henry Le Bœuf to Ernest Closson, 22 March 1919. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/I/4/f.

³¹Henry Le Bœuf to Ernest Closson, 22 March 1919. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/I/4/f.

Brussels.³² During the war, he helped to create the Association des Concerts Symphoniques in Brussels, working closely with François Rasse to offer concerts at the Salle Patria and the Théâtre de la Bourse. This appointment linked the Concerts Populaires with the Belgian pride in native resistance to cultural oppression during the occupation. The first post-war performance by the Concerts Populaires took place on 26 October 1919, conducted by Brahy. The concert was the only one Brahy conducted for the Concerts Populaires. In November 1919, he committed suicide.

The German-Belgian conductor Franz Ruhlmann was named as Brahy's replacement. At the time of his appointment, Ruhlmann was the principal conductor at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie (TRM), and had built his reputation as an opera conductor (see chapter 3). At the end of the 1921–22 season, he resigned his position at the opera house in order to focus his energies on symphonic conducting.³³ His absence from the opera stage, however, was short-lived. In 1923, he returned to the Opéra-Comique in Paris, where he had established himself as a conductor.³⁴ In Brussels, Ruhlmann directed many of the key performances that cemented the reputation of the Concerts Populaires, including the Belgian premiere of Stravinsky's *Petrushka* in 1921 and *Le Sacre du printemps* in 1923, and continued to be a fixture of Brussels symphonic concerts well into the 1930s (see chapter 5).

Under Le Bœuf's direction, the intimate connection between the opera company and symphonic concerts in Brussels broke down as the Concerts Populaires claimed more

³²Ernest Closson offered a biographical sketch of the conductor in "Bibliographie musicale," *L'Indépendance belge*, 18 November 1924. This was part of a short review of a publication by Brahy's friends commemorating the fifth anniversary of his death.

³³"Notes de théâtre," *L'Eventail*, 5 February 1922; Jan Dewilde, "François Ruhlmann (Brussel, 1868–Parijs, 1948)," in *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 352–53. In addition to his engagements in Brussels, Ruhlmann also appeared in Paris, conducting Prokofiev in the composer's piano concerto at the Concerts Colonne in 1932, for instance.

³⁴Valérie Dufour, *Stravinsky à Bruxelles, 1920–1960* (Brussels: Académie Royale de Belgique, 2003), 38.

institutional independence.³⁵ One of Le Bœuf's projects as the new director was the creation of an amateur women's chorale (the Chorale César Franck) under the patronage of the Concerts Populaires in November 1921. The group originally consisted of women of the city's bourgeoisie, including Mme Paul-Emile Janson, Louise and Marie Le Bœuf (Le Bœuf's wife and daughter), Mme Max Janlet, Mme Jules Destrée, and Lallah Vandervelde.³⁶ In 1925, the choir began to recruit men. Le Bœuf described the project in utopian terms:

ce que je veux absolument créer à Bruxelles, c'est la collaboration d'amateurs, c'est-à-dire, celle des gens exerçant dans la journée des professions: depuis le général, l'attaché d'ambassade (nous en avons un dans notre chorale!), jusqu'à l'employé de banque, de ministère, et même un huissier de bureau.³⁷

The Chorale César Franck was linked to the Belgian tradition of community choirs, bands, and orchestras, but it was one of only a few such groups in Belgium that performed in professional concerts. This distinction proved to be problematic for the Concerts Populaires. The same people who sang with the choir were also the regular audience members and subscribers for the concerts. In fact, in 1926, critic Georges Systemans complained to Le Bœuf that the regular Monday night rehearsals for the choir conflicted with the Concerts du Conservatoire, Concerts Defauw, and Concerts Pro Arte: "il est bien dommage de priver mes fidèles chanteurs de ces intéressantes auditions, et d'enlever à ces organismes un groupe intéressant de clientèle... Alors

³⁵Beginning with Adolphe Samuel in 1865, the appointment as conductor at the Concerts Populaires was traditionally linked with the same position at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie (TRM). The administration of the concert society also regularly called upon the chorus of the TRM to perform choral works.

³⁶Arthur Prévost served as the first conductor, upon the recommendation of Corneil de Thoran, director of the TRM. But Prévost only held the post until November of 1922, after which Joseph Jongen, and sometimes Le Bœuf himself, took over conducting duties. Montens, *Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 77–78. Many of these women were celebrated in Belgium for their cultural, social, and humanitarian work. Marie Destrée, wife of the socialist lawyer Jules Destrée, for instance, received attention for her work as an artist and society leader. During World War I, she lived in London, organizing support for Belgian soldiers and refugees. In Belgium, she was a champion of Belgian artists. *L'Eventail* dedicated one of its articles in the "Nos Contemporains" series to her (19 June 1921). For more on Lallah Vandervelde, see chapter 5.

³⁷Henry Le Bœuf to Désiré Demest, 16 October 1926. Quoted in Montens, *Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 79.

peut-être essaierais-je de trouver un autre jour pour les répétitions, le samedi par exemple, qui est généralement libre de concerts du soir.”³⁸

The Repertoire of the Concerts Populaires under Le Bœuf

Le Bœuf envisioned his role in the administration of the Concerts Populaires as dealing not only with the society’s practical and financial concerns, but also with its artistic goals. One of his first post-war articles on music, published in *L’Indépendance belge*, considered the difficulties that Brussels faced in revitalizing music in Belgium after four years of oppression and restriction under German occupation:

L’effet de notre délivrance ne pouvait être générateur de musique. Les premières réactions furent trop aiguës. L’enthousiasme de la joyeuse rentrée, les cris de rues en délire, l’élan miraculeux n’engendrent pas l’harmonie; lorsque, gorgé d’allégresse, on veut savourer son bonheur, c’est le silence et l’isolement qui font goûter le mieux la pure volupté de la pensée libre, ensuite, il faut agir, se mouvoir dans les ruines, édifier en tâtonnant la cité, l’art nouveau.³⁹

The revived concert series faced a dilemma: the works that had defined its identity as a place for new music were no longer innovative works of the avant-garde. Music such as Debussy’s and Richard Strauss’s pre-war symphonic poems had since been folded into the standard repertoire of many concert societies in Europe. Le Bœuf was determined to revive the tradition of performing new works in Brussels and to seek out the post-war avant-garde.⁴⁰ Le Bœuf wanted to take an

³⁸Georges Systemans to Henry Le Bœuf, 6 December 1926. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/VI/30/32.

³⁹Henry Lesbroussart [Henry Le Bœuf], “Musiciens de la terre belge,” *L’Indépendance belge*, 10 April 1919. Soon after the end of the war, Le Bœuf recruited Ernest Closson (1870–1950) to share the responsibility of music criticism at *L’Indépendance belge*. Closson, professor of music history and curator of the Conservatoire’s musical instrument collection, wrote concert reviews as well as book reviews and analytical articles throughout the interwar years. Closson was influenced by pre-war Belgian critic Edmond Evenepoel’s style, and fashioned himself as a strong proponent of Belgian composers. Ernest Closson, “In Memoriam. Edmond Evenepoel,” *L’Indépendance Belge*, 11 March 1931.

⁴⁰See Andrew Deruchie, *The French Symphony at the Fin de Siècle: Style, Culture, and the Symphonic Tradition* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013).

active part in forming the society's repertoire, and he made it clear that his voice was crucial to the artistic profile of his organization:

Ce n'est pas Ruhlmann qui prépare les programmes, c'est moi. Cela fait partie de l'œuvre, comme je l'ai conçue et comme je veux la réaliser, en y mettant le nombre d'années et la progression qu'il faut. [...] Monter un concert, régler l'organisation, administrer, fixer les dates, engager les virtuoses, tout cela n'est rien à côté de la composition des programmes d'une saison. Vous n'en avez pas l'idée quand on veut faire ce que je tente, c'est-à-dire beaucoup d'exécutions d'œuvres anciennes ou modernes peu ou pas connues. Que fallait-il à Bruxelles! Rejouer la *Symphonie inachevée*, *L'apprenti-sorcier* et autres pièces commodes qui ne coûtent aucune répétition! Non, il fallait boucher le trou de la guerre et mettre notre public au courant de la musique mondiale depuis 1913.⁴¹

Le Bœuf's work as the administrator of the Banque d'Outremer positioned him well to determine what music could fill the "trou de la guerre" in Belgium because he made monthly business trips to Paris. He took advantage of his time in the French capital to hear new music by up-and-coming composers, to attend salons, and to establish connections with influential people in Parisian cultural life, including Jeanne Dubost, the Princess de Polignac, the Countess Greffulhe, the Countess de Clermont-Tonnerre, and the viscountess Charles de Noailles.⁴² His call for a measured and reflective return to new music in *L'Indépendance belge* may well have been a response to his first visits to the French capital after the war and the music he found there.

Le Bœuf tempered his ambition to present new works to his audiences with financial prudence. He wrote to Eckhoud about the risk involved in programming new works: "L'aventure doit être autant que possible évitée, et je m'efforce de ne donner de l'inédit à Bruxelles qui si je l'ai entendu ailleurs. Je ne manque jamais une occasion d'entendre une nouvelle œuvre lors de

⁴¹Quoted in Montens, *Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 60.

⁴²Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 54–55. Though his travel was severely restricted during the German occupation, Le Bœuf did have occasion to go both to Amsterdam and to The Hague during the war, presumably offering him some insight into new music beyond occupied Belgium.

mes fréquents voyages à Paris.”⁴³ In fact, Le Bœuf saved the most experimental performances for his private residence.

Music at Le Bœuf’s large townhouse at 181 Avenue Molière in the stylish neighborhood of Uccle, southwest of the city center, served several functions. He organized weekly afternoon meetings of leaders of Brussels’s musical life, where they read and discussed new scores. He also hosted private concerts for the social, intellectual, and artistic elite of Brussels. In a similar fashion to pianist Louis Brassin’s private pre-war concerts, which introduced Wagner’s operas to the Belgian elite before they appeared on the TRM stage, Le Bœuf’s gatherings offered new music in an intimate setting before it were presented to the general public.⁴⁴ Leaders of musical organizations had a space where they could discuss the potential of new works, strengthening the network in Brussels that was based on both personal relationships and institutional connections.

In addition to the sessions to read new scores, Le Bœuf often invited his friends to report on performances of new works that interested him and sent them new scores for evaluation. In 1926, for instance, he asked Henri Prunières, Alphonse Onnou, and Collaer to send him their impressions of works by Kodaly, Hindemith, Casella, Lefy, and Ferroud that were programmed for the fourth International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) festival.⁴⁵ The next year, Le Bœuf wrote to Jongen, who was the director of the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles at the time, to solicit for his opinion about Belgian works, including Emile Mawet’s new *drame lyrique*,

⁴³Henry Le Bœuf to Georges Eckhoud, 2 May 1923. Quoted in Montens, *Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 64.

⁴⁴Pierre Janlet, “Henry Le Bœuf,” *Biographie Nationale*, vol. 40 (Brussels: Etablissements Emile Bruylant, 1977), 604–605. Among those who attended these gatherings were Eugène Ysaÿe, Claire Croiza, Emile Bosquet, Emile Chaumont, the Quatuor Pro Arte, Maurice Weynandt, Georges Pitch, Paul Collaer, Charles Van den Borren, and Ernest Closson. Anne Van Malderen lists many of the private performances that took place at the Le Bœuf home between 1919 and 1927 in “Historique et réception des diverses formations Pro Arte (1912–1947). Apport du répertoire de la musique contemporaine,” Ph.D. diss, Louvain-la-Neuve, 2012, 101–03.

⁴⁵Henry Le Bœuf to Henri Prunières, 7 June 1926. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/VI/29/7. Marcel Cuvelier to Alphonse Onnou and Paul Collaer, 15 June 1926. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/VI/29/10–11.

Astraeine, Maurice Schoemaker's *Les Deux Fantasques*, Gaston Brenta's *Frédégonde*, and Marcel Poot's *Symphonie pour petit orchestre*.⁴⁶

In some cases, however, Le Bœuf allowed a composer's reputation or the promise of a successful performance allay his fears before he heard a work. In May 1924, for instance, Le Bœuf wrote to Honegger ahead of the performances of *Pacific 231*, conducted by Koussevitzky in Paris:

J'espère que ce sera pendant mes séjours à Paris. Quoiqu'il en soit, j'ai tant de confiance dans vos œuvres que je vous demande, dès à présent, de nous réserver celle-ci pour l'année prochaine. Vous savez quel effort je fais pour amener progressivement notre public à connaître toutes les œuvres intéressantes de la musique moderne, c'est pourquoi je voudrais bien que votre *Pacific* figure à notre programme avec le Chant de joie que j'ai entendu à Genève et que je veux également donner à la prochaine saison.⁴⁷

Honegger's *Roi David* had enjoyed a favorable reception in Brussels, leaving Le Bœuf confident enough to make this request.

Besides organizing intimate gatherings to hear new music, Le Bœuf played the part of a nineteenth-century wealthy bourgeois patron, taking advantage of his position as head of the Concerts Populaires to host private performances at his home by internationally-acclaimed musicians who came to Brussels to perform with the concert society.⁴⁸ In 1922, for example, Wanda Landowska performed at his residence. Le Bœuf and his wife hoped to stage a small performance of Stravinsky's *Mavra* for their friends at their home in 1924.⁴⁹ In 1926 and 1927,

⁴⁶Pierre Janlet to Joseph Jongen, 29 March 1927. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/III/10/17.

⁴⁷Henry Le Bœuf to Arthur Honegger, 14 May 1924. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/XV/73/1–4.

⁴⁸Le Bœuf had begun to host these private events at home before the war. In June 1913, for instance, *L'Art moderne* announced an upcoming musical evening that included a performance of Debussy's *La Damoiselle élue* at the Le Bœuf home. Le Bœuf himself conducted the choir and Lallah Vandervelde sang one of the lead roles.

⁴⁹Le Bœuf wrote of this plan in a letter to the composer on 29 January 1924. He envisioned an "exécution complète en scène avec costumes et orchestre." Le Bœuf concluded: "Je le crois très réalisable malgré l'exiguïté de ma maison." The performance, however, never took place. Le Bœuf wrote again to the composer in April 1924 saying that his home would not accommodate the orchestra necessary for such a performance, but that he harbored the

Vladimir Horowitz accepted invitations from Le Bœuf to give private concerts.⁵⁰ In fact, a letter to Horowitz's agent from 1927 offers a particularly illuminating description of Le Bœuf's conception of the function of these private house concerts:

Je comprends parfaitement que lorsque Mr. Horowitz accepte de jouer dans une réunion mondaine, donnée par des personnes qui veulent offrir à leurs amis le plaisir d'entendre un bon virtuose, il réclame des cachets au niveau de son grand talent. La proposition que j'avais faite, il y a quelques mois, à Mr. Horowitz et Mr. Merovitch [sic] n'avait pas ce caractère. Il s'agissait de présenter Mr. Horowitz aux critiques et aux personnalités musicales de Bruxelles. Il m'est impossible d'insister d'avantage sur le rôle que je joue moi-même au point de vue musical belge et international, mais je puis vous dire que des virtuoses de premier rang ont été heureux de participer à des séances de musique chez moi, soit en refusant tout cachet, soit en acceptant des indemnités très inférieures au cachet que j'ai offert à Mr. Horowitz.⁵¹

Le Bœuf's letter indicates that he conceived of his private house concerts as more important than other society gatherings for which musicians were hired to entertain, and that he used his directorship at the Concerts Populaires as a bargaining chip. By virtue of the collection of musicians and critics who attended and the intellectual atmosphere, Le Bœuf's private concerts, he argued, carried particular weight, and the impressive list of musicians who played at his house on Avenue Molière was at once the reason for, and proof of, these gatherings' importance.

The wide reach of Le Bœuf's network and the way he implemented his personal connections, his administrative expertise, and his artistic interests proved to be exceptional resources to the Concerts Populaires. Le Bœuf's 1919 appointment marked the beginning of a

ambition of building his own small concert hall in his garden. (Henry Le Bœuf to Igor Stravinsky, 28 April 1924. Quoted in Dufour, *Stravinsky à Bruxelles*, 266.)

⁵⁰Letters from Prince de Zereteli at the Office des Concerts Zerbason to Henry Le Bœuf concern the specifics of this recital, including the program, the piano, and the fee Horowitz received for the performance (2,000 Belgian francs). For the 1927 concert at Le Bœuf's home, the instrument that Horowitz used for his Concerts Populaires appearance was moved to the private residence. For correspondence concerning the piano, see Marcel Cuvelier to Lucien Oir, 25 April 1927. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/III/9/199.

⁵¹Henry Le Bœuf to Prince de Zereteli, 11 January 1927. For more on the program for the recital at Le Bœuf's house, see Henry Le Bœuf to Alexandre Mérovitch, 6 December 1926. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/IV/17.

period of intense reevaluation of the structure of the society and its repertoire, which lasted until its last season, in 1928–29.

“Trop tôt le *Tannhäuser*?”

Le Bœuf was one of the many Belgian musicians and music enthusiasts who studied Wagner’s works, ideas, and even traveled to Bayreuth in the late nineteenth century. He went in 1896, and again in 1901 for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Festspielhaus.⁵² He wrote reviews of productions of Wagner’s works at the TRM from the perspective of an expert, drawing comparisons between the Bayreuth and Brussels productions.⁵³ Maurice Kufferath’s “vaste campagne de publication,” in which “chaque drame de Wagner devoir faire l’objet d’une analyse historique, dramatique et musicale approfondie,” exposed French-speaking audiences to the composer’s works, and the TRM regularly produced his operas before the war.⁵⁴ Whereas animosity against the German composer had influenced the reception of his works in Paris, most dramatically with the failure of the Parisian premiere of *Tannhäuser* in 1861 and later in the 1870s after the siege of the French city, in Brussels, Wagner found many unreserved supporters of his music. Furthermore, French enthusiasts of the composer’s music regularly traveled to the Belgian capital to hear operas that were not staged in Paris. Manuel Couvreur credits the symphonic concerts in Brussels in part for the developing taste for Wagner’s music in Brussels, as excerpts of the composer’s operas were featured regularly on nineteenth-century programs

⁵²Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 19–20; 23. The leaders of the intellectual circles in Brussels before the war were self-professed Wagnerians—including Edmond Picard, leader of the circle l’Art, and Octave Maus, secretary of Les XX and director of La Libre Esthétique. See, for instance, Octave Maus, *Souvenirs d’un Wagnériste: le Théâtre de Bayreuth* (Brussels: Veuve Monnom, 1888).

⁵³See, for instance, “Parsifal laïque et français,” *L’Art moderne* 34, no. 2 (11 January 1914): 9–11, in which he praises the production at the Monnaie, comparing it to Bayreuth.

⁵⁴Manuel Couvreur, Introduction to *La Monnaie wagnérienne* (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 1998), ii.

organized by Adolphe Samuel and Joseph Dupont. Wagner himself came to Brussels to conduct two concerts on 24 and 28 March 1860.⁵⁵

During the German occupation of Brussels, however, Belgians were confronted with performances of Wagner's works and productions of his operas given by German troupes invited to perform for German officers at the TRM. Wagner as a symbol of German culture took on two very different meanings during World War I. For Germany, he was the symbol of national glory; for the Allies, he was the exemplar of the "bloated music" that "matched the basest implications of the word *boche*."⁵⁶ In Belgium, the composer's music became fraught with new political and cultural significance, as it was inextricably linked to Belgium's suffering during the war. Even the Wagnerian *Le Bœuf* separated himself from Wagner's music during the war. In a 1916 letter to Georges Bernard, he compared the inexhaustible beauty of Beethoven's piano sonatas with Wagner's works, of which "nous étions arrivés à saturation."⁵⁷

The association between Wagner's music and the German occupation lingered after the liberation of Belgium. In the spring of 1920, when the socialist group *l'Echo du Peuple* planned to organize a performance of *Tannhäuser*, reactions were swift and decisive. Three leagues in Belgium (*Ligue du Souvenir*, *Ligue des Patriotes*, and *Amitiés Françaises*) called for an immediate and forceful protest against the *Echo du Peuple*'s plan. The artistic journal *Pourquoi Pas?* ran a series of articles entitled "Trop tôt le *Tannhäuser*?" which objected against the *Echo du Peuple*'s plan. The author reminded Belgium that it was "prise, étranglée, piétinée, volée et ravagée par ces Allemands qui avaient juré de respecter [la] neutralité." The reappearance of

⁵⁵Henri Vanhulst includes excerpts from enthusiastic responses to these concerts published in *Le Guide musical* in "Les Sociétés de concerts," 28–29.

⁵⁶Glenn Watkins, *Proof through the Night: Music and the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 4.

⁵⁷Henry Le Bœuf to Georges Bernard, 17 August 1916. Quoted in Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 30.

Wagner in Belgium was considered heralding a dangerous return to the “système insidieux et sournois de la pénétration allemande; la musique, la saucisse, le jambon, la choucroute, la bière, le domestique, l’espion, le commerçant, le soldat...”⁵⁸ The second article in the series elaborated on the question of Wagner in Belgian concerts:

Evidemment, un jour viendra où l’on pourra applaudir du Wagner en public sans attrister ou mettre en colère les gens qui ont le courage de la haine et se proclamant fiers d’entretenir leur rancune (il y en a encore...); mais ce jour-là n’est pas arrivé et rien n’impose d’en hâter la venue.

A postscript at the end of this installment reports that *Pourquoi Pas?* had received an anonymous letter accusing its music critics of being “superpatriotes bavants d’hystérie [...] infectés par le malfaisant microbe du patriotisme poussé jusqu’au sadisme contre l’art.”⁵⁹

The following week, *Pourquoi Pas?* printed a letter from E. Honet, a veteran of the war, who wrote about General Charles Mangin’s attendance at a performance of Wagner’s *Ring* after the French army entered German territory. Honet’s point here was one that would be repeated throughout the interwar years to defend the decision to program Wagner, namely, that Mangin’s gesture was proof that it was possible to “distinguer ce qui est bien dans l’âme allemande de ce qui est mal.”⁶⁰ The editor’s response pointed out that Mangin was in German territory, whereas the Belgian context evoked memories of Brussels’s suffering under the German occupation, when performances of Wagner’s operas at the requisitioned TRM became symbolic of the oppression of Belgium. Despite the backlash in the press against its plans, and the refusal of singers from the TRM to sing, the Echo du Peuple’s concert took place.

⁵⁸“Trop tôt, le ‘Tannhäuser’! *Pourquoi pas?* 10, no. 304 (28 May 1920).

⁵⁹“Trop tôt, le ‘Tannhäuser’!” *Pourquoi pas?* 10, no. 305 (4 June 1920). This installment also includes comments on an article in *Le Peuple* written by Louis Piérard, pointing out that Piérard’s defense of the planned performance by Echo du Peuple disregarded the fact that “l’âme allemande, brutale, impérieuse et dominatrice” appeared in Wagner’s music. *Pourquoi pas?* predicted that those who had been deported during the war, particularly, would not celebrate the return of Wagner’s music.

⁶⁰“Trop tôt, le Tannhäuser!” *Pourquoi pas?* 10, no. 306 (11 June 1920).

More important than the question of the Echo du Peuple concert, however, were the varying perceptions of German cultural identity. The changes in Germany's character and fortunes, as reflected in Honet's argument, appeared elsewhere in *Pourquoi Pas?* A political cartoon, published in June 1920, for instance, juxtaposed an emaciated post-war Germany (dressed as a Valkyrie) with the robust 1914 version of herself. Despite the sickly appearance of the 1920 version, she declares, perhaps with optimism: "Tout même, j'ai maigri" (Figure 1.1). Some Belgians, however, pointed to German celebrations of the composer as evidence of a continuing attitude of militarism in Germany.

Figure 1.1— "La Germanie de 20 devant son portrait de 14," *Pourquoi pas?* 10, no. 307 (18 June 1920)



In a review of the University of Berlin's celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the unification of Germany, which included a concert of Wagner's music, *L'Eventail* called the performance an "occasion de manifestations chauvines et de démonstrations d'un nationalisme agressif."⁶¹ The reintroduction of Wagner, the author wrote, was more dangerous than the commercial ventures to increase Germany's trade. Concerns about such dangers—both economic and cultural—continued as an undercurrent, even after the conclusion of the May 1921 meetings in London to determine the amount of reparations to be paid by Germany. *L'Eventail*, for instance, in 1922, published a short, unsigned commentary on Germany:

L'Allemagne est riche: d'accord. Cela signifie qu'elle a un très gros potentiel de richesses; que son capital industriel et humain est intact; que le jour où le moteur sera embrayé, il développera une puissance considérable; que si les réparations n'existaient pas, il faudrait les inventer, car l'Allemagne supporterait une charge infiniment moindre que tous les pays d'Europe et d'Amérique.⁶²

Less than a year after the Echo du Peuple scandal, and despite continued unease about German music in Brussels, however, the Conservatoire offered a program that included the final scene of *Tristan und Isolde*, excerpts from *Parsifal*, and the overture to *Tannhäuser*. The concerts were well received, which one reviewer found puzzling, given that Brussels had been saturated with Wagner's music before the war, and Wagnerian productions at the TRM were popular among Germans living in Belgium when German troupes performed in German. The author speculated that the apparent newfound enthusiasm for Wagner was not due to a rediscovery of the composer's music, but rather,

En réalité, ce n'était pas une pure joie artistique que ce public exprimait par son délire: c'était une belliqueuse manifestation, provocante, blessante pour ceux qui avaient l'audace de ne point partager le sentiment des exaltés.⁶³

⁶¹*L'Eventail*, 20 February 1921.

⁶²"Notes de la Semaine," *L'Eventail*, 3 December 1922.

⁶³"Actualités. Wagner au Conservatoire," *L'Eventail*, 20 February 1921.

The critic concluded that enthusiasm for Wagner had nothing to do with the music, but rather a statement of defiance against Germans who equated the composer with German culture, and therefore associated admirers of the music with the political and militaristic expressions of the Germans who had adopted Wagner's music. This move by the Conservatoire might have been, however, an ominous auger of things to come:

Des manifestations du genre de celles du Conservatoire doivent-elles remplir d'aise le cœur des Boches. Ils voient revenir à eux les sympathies intellectuelles qu'ils avaient si adroitement exploitées avant la guerre. Quelle victoire pour eux!⁶⁴

Although Wagner had started to appear on French programs again, the critic repeated the concerns about the symbolic weight of the composer's music, concluding with the prediction that where the Conservatoire, a national institution led, others would follow.

“Êtes-vous partisan ou non de la reprise des œuvres de Wagner?”: The 1921 Referendum

In light of lingering suspicion and hostility against Wagner as a symbol of this German threat, and Le Bœuf's concerted effort to erase administrative connections between the Concerts Populaires and Junne's familial connections to the German military, the 1921 referendum to reintroduce the composer's music into the society's repertoire could have been doomed to fail. The strategy, however, gave at least the illusion that the decision to return to Wagner was a collective Belgian decision, rather than a personal judgment on Le Bœuf's part. Belgian audiences were invited to reevaluate the implications of hearing music by a German icon both in the wake of the war and in relation to music's importance to the city's cultural reputation before the war.

⁶⁴Ibid.

L'Eventail printed a delicately-worded announcement about the Concerts Populaires project to poll audience members about Wagner's music: "Les Concerts Populaires ont décidé, par déférence envers ceux qui s'étaient abonnés sur la foi d'une liste d'œuvres à exécuter et qui ne comprenait pas Wagner, de demander l'avis de ses abonnés et habitués à ce sujet."⁶⁵ At the 26 and 27 February 1921 performances by the Concerts Populaires, ballots were distributed at the door, with the question: "Êtes-vous partisan ou non de la reprise des œuvres de Wagner?" The ballot also included space for suggesting which of Wagner's works should be performed at future concerts.⁶⁶ The Brussels audience voted to bring Wagner's music back to the concert hall.

L'Indépendance Belge described the response to the referendum:

Certains, que le dernier Concert Populaire tentait peu, y vinrent cependant par habitude ou pour ne point se dispenser d'assister à un concert d'œuvres belges. Pour ceux-là, l'enquête à laquelle on les pria de participer était un événement. D'aucuns jugeront qu'après le concert du Conservatoire le résultat de ce referendum n'enfoncera qu'une porte ouverte. C'est cependant un désir de correction à l'égard de ses abonnés (correction poussée très loin) et peut-être aussi l'idée d'un divertissement piquant qui firent prendre à l'administration des concerts cette mesure dont les résultats prouvent qu'elle n'était pas si totalement inutile. Ces résultats établissent la proportion d'un qui proteste (en gribouillant sur sa feuille: 'Mort aux boches') pour deux indifférents et pour trois, enfin, qui se réjouissent.⁶⁷

Pierre Janlet, the author of the article—and also *Le Bœuf*'s assistant at the Concerts Populaires—emphasized not only the overwhelming majority of votes for Wagner, but also that the audience for that concert was particularly representative of Brussels's tastes. In addition to the regular subscribers, he pointed out, there were also those who came to the concert specifically to hear the all-Belgian program: Victor Vreuls's *Le Jour de Fête*, (which Janlet described as a "chef-d'œuvre" and "bien wallonne"); one of Arthur de Greef's piano concertos, performed by the

⁶⁵May de Rudder, "Musique," *L'Eventail*, 20 February 1921.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Pierre Janlet, "Au Concert Populaire," *L'Indépendance belge*, 8 March 1921.

composer; three songs by Adolphe Samuel, performed by Maurice Weynandt of the TRM; and Joseph Dupont's *Rondes Ardennaises*. The decision to match the Wagner referendum with a Belgian program was a savvy one. The audience represented admirers of national music, as Janlet's article implied. The decision was therefore made by the most loyal of Belgian concertgoers. Moreover, the program representing Belgian compositions neutralized the threat of German cultural domination; Belgian music and Wagner's works could, and would, coexist in the society's future programs.

Within a week of the referendum, the directors of the Concerts Populaires sent a circular to its subscribers, and also published it in the press. Of the 3,818 ballots submitted, 2,378 were in favor of including Wagner in future concerts. The administration framed their move to include Wagner in the rest of the concerts of the season as one that gave the audiences exactly what they had asked for. The closing of the letter promised: "On peut conclure des résultats du referendum que la majorité désire la réinscription aux programme des Concerts Populaires des œuvres de Richard Wagner. Pour tenir compte de l'ensemble des opinions exprimées, cette reprise se fera avec modération, et sans donner lieu à aucune manifestation extraordinaire."⁶⁸

The 1921–22 season concluded with a concert that featured the first act of *La Walkyrie*, performed by singers from the Opéra in Paris and Lucien Van Obbergh from the TRM, side by side with Brahms's Violin Concerto, performed by Branislaw Hubermann.⁶⁹ In his review of the concert for *L'Indépendance Belge*, Ernest Closson began by evoking the pre-war enthusiasm for Wagner, Maurice Kufferath's book on the opera, and the durability of the work itself. He concluded by recounting the enthusiastic reception of the work, leading him to speculate that the

⁶⁸May de Rudder, "Musique," *L'Eventail*, 13 March 1921.

⁶⁹"Musique," *L'Eventail*, 21 May 1922.

political concerns that had been swirling around the question of programming Wagner's work would disappear and that the composer's work would soon return to the TRM.⁷⁰ He also took the opportunity to praise the administration of the Concerts Populaires—namely Le Bœuf—for his “services inappréciables rendus à la vie artistique bruxelloise.” He went on to enumerate the different facets of Le Bœuf's work:

Les difficultés étaient de tout genre. Des exigences nouvelles des musiciens (justifiées d'ailleurs par la situation générale) bouleversaient les prévisions budgétaires habituelles [...]. Au point de vue artistique, il fallait faire rattraper au public bruxellois et aux artistes eux-mêmes un retard de quatre années, l'initier à des nouveautés qui avaient fait le tour du monde sans passer par ici. Une esthétique nouvelle, d'une audace inconnue, avait insurgé. Il fallait aller résolument de l'avant, jouer des œuvres qui, nécessairement, ne pouvaient plaire à tout le monde, mais que tout le monde devait connaître, quitte à maugréer d'avoir appris quelque chose...⁷¹

Given Closson's close personal connection with Le Bœuf, such homage to the director of the Concerts Populaires is unsurprising and aligned not only Closson but also the publication with the projects that the Concerts Populaires had taken on in the name of preserving and developing the city's musical identity.

Though Wagner's music returned to the regular repertoire of the Concerts Populaires, and later to the TRM, as Closson had predicted it would, discomfort about the composer's national identity lingered. In a 1923 review of the last French-language volume of the composer's writings, for instance, the opera critic Lucien Solvay pointed out that Wagner viewed Beethoven as the “incarnation idéale de la pensée allemande,” and that Wagner “ne songeait qu'aux victoires de son peuple et à sa sublime et providentielle supériorité sur les autres misérables nations.”⁷² Despite such objections, Wagner's music continued to appear on programs in

⁷⁰Ernest Closson, “Chronique Musicale. Le Concert Populaire,” *L'Indépendance belge*, 20 May 1922.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Lucien Solvay, “Wagner parle...” *L'Eventail*, 21 January 1923.

Brussels throughout the interwar period. The Concerts Populaires offered at least one composition by Wagner each season after the referendum. In fact, the final concert of each season thereafter included at least one act of a Wagner opera.⁷³ May de Rudder treated these performances as a matter of course in the season.

The 1922–23 season, which marked the first year when Wagner was integrated into the repertoire, is representative of the structure of programs at the Concerts Populaires in the 1920s (see Table 1.1 for the 1922–23 season’s concert programs). New compositions by foreign composers with established international reputations such as Manuel de Falla, Maurice Ravel, and Sergei Prokofiev were balanced by concert works that represented the universal tradition of concert music (as represented by German-speaking composers—Mozart, the newly-rehabilitated Wagner, Brahms, and J.S. Bach). New works by Belgian composers made up the third part of programs, such as Victor Vreuls’s Symphony, and Albert Dupuis’s *Herman et Dorothee*.

⁷³On 27 May 1923, the Concerts Populaires offered a full, unstaged performance of *L’Or du Rhin*. The following season, the last concert included Act I of *Siegfried*, followed by Act 3 of *La Walkyrie* in 1925.

Table 1.1– Concerts Populaires, 1922–23 Season

15 October 1922	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. J.S. Bach- <i>Suite</i> en D major, dite Overture, no. 3 2. Mozart- Violin Concerto no. 5, K. 219 3. Albeniz- Three excerpts from <i>Ibéria</i> : a) El Puerto b) El Albaicin c) Fête-Dieu à Séville 4. Falla- Three Dances from <i>Le Tricorne</i> a) Les voisins b) Danse du Meunier c) Danse finale (Brussels premiere) 5. Wagner- Overture to <i>Der fliegende Holländer</i>
12 November 1922	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Méhul- Overture to <i>Stratonice</i> 2. Brahms– Concerto for Violin and Cello in A Minor, op. 102 3. Vreuls- Symphony in E Major 4. Ravel- <i>Ma Mère l’Oye</i> 5. Ravel- <i>La Valse</i> (Brussels premiere)
10 December 1922 (concert extraordinaire)	<p>Concert dedicated to César Franck</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Franck- <i>Psyché</i> 2. Franck- a) Nocturne b) La Procession 3. Franck- <i>Rédemption</i>
14 January 1923	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Schubert- Symphony no. 5 2. a) Prokofiev- “Romance sans paroles” b) Rimsky-Korsakov- “La Rose et le Rossignol,” orchestrated by Prokofieff c) Moussorgsky- “Hopac” 3. Dupuis- <i>Herman et Dorothée</i>, poème symphonique 4. Debussy- <i>Trois Ballades de François Villon</i> 5. Prokofiev- <i>Suite Scythe</i>, op. 20 (Belgian premiere)
4 February 1923	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Beethoven-Symphony no. 2 2. Mendelssohn- Violin Concerto 3. Joseph Jongen- <i>Prélude élégiaque et Scherzo</i>, op. 66 4. Roussel- <i>Pour une Fête de Printemps</i> 5. Moussorgsky- Dances from <i>Khovantchina</i>
18 March 1923	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Debussy- <i>Nocturnes</i> 2. A. Caplet- <i>Prières</i> 3. Chausson- <i>Viviane</i> 4. Paul Dupin- <i>Trois Canons</i> a) Notre Cœur (maxime) b) Le Sphinx (excursion) c) Chant pour chanter (maxime) (world premiere) 5. Chabrier- <i>A La musique</i> 6. Ravel- <i>La Valse</i>
6 May 1923 (concert extraordinaire)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mozart- Symphony no. 2, op. 45 2. J.S. Bach- Keyboard Concerto in D Major 3. Stravinsky- <i>Le Sacre du printemps</i>
27 May 1923 (concert extraordinaire)	<p>Wagner- <i>L’Or du Rin</i> (full opera in French translation)</p>

Prokofiev at the Concerts Populaires

Commentary about the Wagner referendum and the subsequent performances of the German composer's works in Brussels went largely unnoticed in the international press. The appearance of newer music, however, proved to be of the utmost importance to Belgian critics writing for foreign journals. In an overview of music in Brussels for *La Revue musicale*, for instance, Auguste Getteman proclaimed:

La vie musicale belge, et en particulier celle de la capitale, se développe actuellement avec une rapidité et un intensité qui surprend même les plus optimistes de ses animateurs. [...] [Les Concerts Populaires], tenus à quelque circonspection en raison d'un passé glorieux mais pesant, vis-à-vis d'un public dont l'importance même impliquait la présence de nombreux éléments malaisés à convertir, usèrent à la fois modération, de fermeté, de bonhomie, et d'audace: de la *Fantaisie* pour piano et orchestre de Debussy à la *Suite Scythe* de Prokofiev, c'est la peine si l'on s'aperçut de l'énorme chemin parcouru.⁷⁴

Sergey Prokofiev's *Suite Scythe* came to symbolize modern music in Belgium. The work appeared consistently in lists of repertoire that supported claims that Belgian musical life was oriented toward the future. The 1923 performance facilitated debates among Belgian critics about the value of the work and its place in Prokofiev's output, while the exotic primitivism of the work's subject and sound aligned with the city's tastes.

Le Bœuf and his collaborators used a familiar structure for most of the programs for the Concerts Populaires. For the 15 and 16 January 1923 concerts, the program balanced a familiar nineteenth-century works (Schubert's Symphony no. 5) with a new work that had already enjoyed success abroad (Prokofiev's *Suite Scythe*), some art songs (by Prokofiev and Moussorgsky), and a new work by a young Belgian composer (Dupuis's *Hermann et Dorothee*). In concert reviews, the nineteenth-century repertoire generally received only passing comments, usually by way of drawing comparisons—both favorable and unfavorable—to the newer works.

⁷⁴Auguste Getteman, "Belgique, La Musique à Bruxelles," *La Revue musicale* 4 no. 5 (1 March 1923): 175.

The *Suite Scythe*, completed in 1914, had already been performed in Petrograd, Chicago, Paris, London, and Geneva by the time it had its Belgian premiere. There is evidence that the directors of the Concerts Populaires were planning to program the work as early as 1921. Pierre Janlet listed Prokofiev's composition among those that Ruhlmann planned to conduct in the future, to continue the momentum of presenting new music in Brussels.⁷⁵ The 1923 performance took place five months before the Brussels premiere of *Le Sacre du printemps*, and Belgian critics anticipated a controversy over Prokofiev's music. Accounts of the audience reception, however, varied. Some reported that Prokofiev's work met with a noisy response, from those for and against the new work. Henri Mangin, music critic for the socialist newspaper *Le Peuple*, wrote that the performance had been poised to incite scandal in Belgium: "Comme il fallait s'y attendre, il y eut des rumeurs protestataires, des sorties de clients scandalisés, et de bruyantes contre-manifestations."⁷⁶ Likewise, May de Rudder, writing for *L'Eventail*, painted a similar image of the reception: "Des auditeurs s'indigent, pestent ou se sauvent, d'autres tiennent bou, rient, s'amuse... comme à l'orchestre ! [...] Quelques-uns ont applaudi ce nouveau monstre; des sifflets ont répondu."⁷⁷

Joseph Jongen also mused on the effect of the music on the audience at the Concerts Populaires:

Pour parler *public*, jamais encore on n'a entendu un pareil vacarme à la Monnaie. Notamment dans le début de la 1^{re} partie, l'effet de sauvagerie est effarant, il produit une impression physique indéniable et à laquelle il est impossible de résister. C'est évidemment *Scythe* à souhait, mais là il n'est plus question de musique, le musicien n'intervient plus que comme moyen sonore. Je ne veux pas entreprendre l'analyse de

⁷⁵Other works in the list of future performances included Roussel's *Festin d'Araignée*, Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*, Scriabin's *Poème d'Extase*, and Stravinsky's *Petrushka* and *Feu d'Artifice* (Pierre Janlet, "Belgique: Bruxelles," *La Revue musicale* 2, no. 11 [1 October 1921]: 266).

⁷⁶Henri Mangin, "Les Concerts Populaires," *Le Peuple*, 16 January 1923.

⁷⁷May de Rudder, "Musique," *L'Eventail*, 21 January 1923.

cette œuvre qu'il faut avant tout *entendre*. Les commentaires ne serviraient à rien. La dureté voulue des harmonies va jusqu'à l'exaspération, jusqu'au malaise. C'est naturellement ce qu'à voulu l'auteur. On peut ne pas aimer cette œuvre—je suis de ceux-là—on ne peut toutefois résister à cette force de la nature qui vous emporte malgré vous dans son tourbillon.⁷⁸

Auguste Getteman described the audience's reaction in a manner that balanced the two extreme descriptions of the work's receptions:

Cette fois l'incompréhension fut telle que l'audition finit dans les rires et les cris d'animaux. Il s'est pourtant trouvé dans la presse trois ou quatre voix qui, sans comprendre tout à fait cette œuvre, ont fait preuve de bonne volonté et de modération. Ce résultat, très appréciable dans notre pays, est symptomatique de l'évolution que provoque dans l'esprit des auditeurs le système d'éducation musicale intronisé par les Concerts Populaires, et poursuivi par eux avec un persévérance, un goût et un talent qu'on ne saurait assez louer.⁷⁹

By contrast, other reports described the kind of sympathetic audience that distinguished Brussels from Paris. Philippe Mousset in *La Nation belge*, for instance, wrote: "la 'Suite Scythe' fut accueillie à Petrograd par de bruyantes protestations; le public bruxellois, infiniment plus raisonnables, ou plus sceptique, s'est contenté d'applaudir les efforts de M. Ruhlmann et l'admirable conscience des musiciens d'orchestre."⁸⁰ In general, scandals and demonstrations over new music were limited in Brussels, but the novelty of Prokofiev's work challenged even the Brussels audience, which had a reputation of approaching new music with a levelheaded attitude.

The *Suite Scythe* propelled Prokofiev into popularity in Brussels. The similarities between his work and Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps* invited comparison in the press.

⁷⁸Joseph Jongen, "Les Concerts Populaires," *La Belgique musicale* 1, no. 5 (15 March 1923): 74.

⁷⁹Auguste Getteman, "Belgique: La Musique à Bruxelles," *La Revue musicale* 4, no. 5 (1 March 1923): 77.

⁸⁰Philippe Mousset, "Musique. Quatrième Concert Populaire," *La Nation belge*, 15 January 1923.

Georges Systemans, for instance, compared the two composers, both Russian and both looking to the prehistoric past of their nation for inspiration. He declared:

M. Serge Prokofieff dépasse assurément, en audace et en sauvagerie, Stravinsky lui-même. Art de sauvage, par sa véhémence effrénée, sa rudesse agressive, sa déchirante exaspération: mais d'un sauvage raffiné jusqu'à la corruption, jusqu'au mépris de tout ce qu'on appelait jusqu'ici harmonie, ordre de beauté. Ce produit d'une mentalité primitive enivrée au contact de l'atmosphère bolcheviste est distant de notre culture actuelle à un point tel qu'on se demande si jamais un lien se nouera entre ce surslavisme et la compréhension latine.⁸¹

Paul Collaer for his part admired the work, declaring: "Dans la 'Suite Scythe,' Prokofieff réussit admirablement [...] Ses autres œuvres sont souvent quelconques ou ennuyeuses."⁸² As an admirer of modernist primitivism in other works, most notably Darius Milhaud's *La Création du monde*, which appeared on the program for the Concerts Pro Arte many times in the 1920s and Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*, Collaer's admiration for *Suite Scythe* is unsurprising.⁸³

May de Rudder, on the other hand, panned the *Suite Scythe*, even though she heard potential in Prokofiev's music. She compared the suite unfavorably to the composer's songs, performed by Vera Janacopoulos as part of the same Concerts Populaires program. She concluded that the range in Prokofiev's works left her to hope "que M. Prokofieff qui n'est plus

⁸¹Georges Systemans, "Le mouvement musical. Le Concert Populaire et M. Prokofieff. Edouard Risler et les sonates de Beethoven," *La Libre Belgique*, 16 January 1923.

⁸²Paul Collaer, "La Musique: Les œuvres nouvelles aux Concerts Populaires de Bruxelles et aux Nouveaux Concerts d'Anvers," *Sélection* 4 (1924): 363–4.

⁸³Collaer wrote an extensive article on *Le Sacre du printemps* ahead of the Concerts Populaires performance later in the spring of 1923. He described the effect of Stravinsky's use of primitivism with enthusiasm: "le *Sacre* est une œuvre qui agit fortement sur le fond subconscient de notre âme, parce qu'elle exprime un ordre de sentiments très généraux, et très anciens: ceux-là même qui se trouvent à l'aurore de la vie: la peur de l'homme en face de la nature; son désir de la rendre favorable. A mon avis, c'est ceci qui détermine le caractère primitif du *Sacre du Printemps*, et non la primitivité de ce qui se passe sur la scène." Paul Collaer, "Le Sacre du Printemps," *Arts et lettres d'aujourd'hui* 1, no. 17 (29 April 1923): 374–75.

un ‘jeune’ et qui a du talent, certes, l’emploiera mieux ailleurs.”⁸⁴ In the Concerts Populaires program, “nous eûmes de ce compositeur, à la fois, le meilleur et le pire très probablement.”⁸⁵

The mixed reactions to Prokofiev in the press led to further discussion of his music. He offered a piano recital shortly after the Concert Populaire, which featured his second and third piano sonatas, *Visions fugitives*, *Danza et Gavotte*, the scherzo from *L’Amour de trois oranges*, and *Deux contes de la vieille grand-mère*. The concert, organized by the Concerts Chester, invited critics to revisit and reevaluate their initial impressions of his style and his work. De Rudder found this program more to her taste, writing that it:

Nous permit d’applaudir sans réserve un artiste original, qui a le droit de l’être parce qu’il a quelque chose à dire et qu’il l’exprime le plus souvent de la façon la plus suggestive ; point d’artifice péniblement trouvé dans ces combinaisons sonores nouvelles, imprévues souvent, mais toujours spontanées, colorées, et qui ne méprisent point systématiquement les formes ou les expressions habituelles.

She concluded: “Nous sommes heureux de voir en Prokofieff autre chose que l’homme de la *Suite Scythe*.”⁸⁶ Other critics shared her sentiment. Georges Systemans exclaimed in his review of the same recital:

Que nous voilà loin des débordements de la Suite Scythe! Ses compositions pour le piano—la part faite des coutumières indépendances harmoniques et tonales—se rattachent aux éternelles lois de construction et de développement: un Prokofieff au fond traditionaliste, branché sur le romantisme de Chopin dont plus d’une fois le souvenir s’évoquait par le mélodisme, le rythme ou l’écriture; mais parant cette solide armature de tout ce que peut inventer l’imagination la plus riche et la plus originale: floraison grouillante de couleurs, de rythmes, d’humour satirique ou halin, avec ce parfum troublant de primitivité barbare et de férocité féline qui répond assez exactement à la personnalité du jeune écrivain.⁸⁷

⁸⁴May de Rudder, “Musique,” *L’Eventail*, 21 January 1923.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶May de Rudder, “Musique,” *L’Eventail*, 11 March 1923.

⁸⁷Georges Systemans, “Mouvement musical. Concerts du Marais. Serge Prokofieff et Léopold Samuel. Un nouvel interprète de Boris Godounow. L’épuration de la Brabançonne et la philosophie de Grétry,” *La Libre Belgique*, 13 March 1923.

The critical controversy surrounding Prokofiev's music brought the composer to the attention of those in charge of organizing performances in Brussels. Prokofiev returned to the Belgian capital many times after 1923. In November 1924 he played his Piano Concerto no. 3 and to hear the symphonic suite from the ballet *Chout* performed at the Concerts Populaires. In 1925, the Quartet Pro Arte played his String Quartet no. 1 on the 16 February 1925 program of the Concerts Pro Arte, and the following season, the series programmed the premiere of his Wind Quintet, Op. 39. In 1929, Desiré Defauw conducted the *Classical Symphony*, and later in the same season, the composer's opera *Le Joueur* appeared in French translation at the TRM to acclaim. Six years later, the composer gave a recital of his works at Charles Leirens's Maison d'Art.⁸⁸ Such a trajectory mirrors that of other composers who found success in the Belgian capital, including Milhaud, Stravinsky, and Hindemith.

Both Le Bœuf and Collaer cited the 1923 performance of the *Suite Scythe* as an important event in Brussels's musical history and named the work as a key example of modern music.⁸⁹ Collaer pointed to the work as an example of a "living" composition that avoided clichés and banalities; a quality that was more important to him than that of "being modern" (see chapter 2 for more on the language of Collaer's criticism).⁹⁰ In fact, the *Suite Scythe* figured prominently on a radio concert of Prokofiev's music in 1936 organized as part of Collaer's series on composers of the twentieth century.

⁸⁸Program for 25 January 1935 concert, Fonds Fauconnier, AVB, Box 71.

⁸⁹See Henry Le Bœuf to Paul Collaer, 9 April 1933. Archives de la Société Philharmonique (ASPh), Box 7.

⁹⁰Paul Collaer to André Souris, 22 October 1925, in Paul Collaer, *Correspondance avec des amis musiciens*, ed. Robert Wangermée (Sprimont: Mardaga, 1996), 219.

Le Bœuf and Belgian Musical Nationalism

May de Rudder was quick to connect the subject of Albert Dupuis's *Herman et Dorothee*, performed on the same 14 and 15 January 1923 program as the *Suite Scythe*, to Belgian identity and Belgian history. De Rudder wrote of the first movement: "Le premier épisode (cortège des réfugiés en exil) aurait pu illustrer nos malheureuses processions en 1914!"⁹¹ Though the performances took place more than six years after the end of the German occupation, the memory of the war continued to inform music criticism in Brussels. For Le Bœuf, the Concerts Populaires was one of several outlets to express national identity and to support young Belgian composers.

In a letter to the newly appointed conductor Brahy, in 1919, Le Bœuf wrote about his vision for the place that new Belgian music should have in the repertoire:

Pour répondre au public et en même temps vous assurer les subsides que nous demandons, il faudra faire une part à la musique belge. Je suis de votre avis que cette part ne doit pas être exagérée, mais il y a lieu cependant de soutenir les efforts de nos jeunes compositeurs qui ont très peu d'occasions de s'entendre eux-mêmes; au surplus, nous pouvons trouver dans la musique belge des pages intéressantes.⁹²

Although most programs of the Concerts Populaires featured at least one work by a Belgian composer (Table 1.1), Le Bœuf's attitude towards them was less than enthusiastic. In his letter, Le Bœuf considered potential subsidies for including Belgian compositions in the Concerts Populaires programming, showing his calculations to appeal to nationalist sentiment, rather than an aesthetic interest in the composers or their music. The strategy of pairing an all-Belgian program with the 1921 Wagner referendum reflects his shrewdness. This strategy, however, was

⁹¹May de Rudder, "Musique," *L'Eventail*, 21 January 1923. Reviews of the Dupuis work do not mention that the composer took the subject from the epic poem in German by Johann Wolfgang van Goethe. Perhaps acknowledging such a connection to Germany would have weakened the connections between the composition and the Belgian experience during the war.

⁹²Henry Le Bœuf to Edouard Brahy, 24 March 1919. Quoted in Montens, *Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 58.

complicated by the conflicting conceptions of what Belgian audiences wanted. Le Bœuf had to navigate between the idealistic view of a national audience that demanded music from native composers and the reality that Le Bœuf observed, namely that Belgian works “malheureseuement, laissent le public indifférent.”⁹³

Le Bœuf found several other ways to promote Belgian compositions in addition to the programs at the Concerts Populaires to respond to conflicting messages about public opinion about Belgian composers. His relationship with Henry Prunières allowed him to help promote Belgian musical life abroad. He met Prunières during a business trip to Paris shortly after the end of World War I. They began an extended correspondence that spring, mainly about Prunières’s new *Revue musicale*. Given Le Bœuf’s work for *L’Art moderne* before the war, his collaboration with *L’Indépendance belge* after the war, and his position at the Concerts Populaires, Prunières asked him to find Belgian subscribers and contributors for the new review. Le Bœuf himself invested in the review. In his letters to other possible Belgian supporters, he underlined the potential to disseminate information about Belgian musical life through the new periodical.⁹⁴ When it came to finding Belgian contributors, Prunières asked Le Bœuf for suggestions. Among those whom Le Bœuf recommended were Paul Collaer and René Lyr.⁹⁵ From 1922 until 1926,

⁹³Montens, *Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 63.

⁹⁴See Henry Le Bœuf to M. Dupierreux, Chef du Cabinet au Ministre des Sciences et des Arts, no date. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/XXI/21.

⁹⁵See FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/XXI/77, 79, and 94. In fact, René Lyr’s association with *La Revue musicale* ended bitterly. Prunières invited Lyr to be the administrator of his review in Belgium. Lyr understood that Prunières was offering the position only to him. When he found out that other Belgians had also been invited to contribute, he wrote an irate letter to Prunières indicating that he took this decision as a personal affront and a commentary on his writing (René Lyr to Henry Prunières, 19 February 1921. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/XXI/94). A month later, Lyr wrote a similar letter chastising Le Bœuf for the misunderstanding, in which he offered his interpretation for the real reason behind it: “Je crois que la véritable raison de l’attitude de M. Prunières à mon égard réside dans le fait que je suis avant tout, le défenseur décidé de notre Art National.” (Lyr to Le Bœuf 19 March 1921. FHLB, Mus Ms 4147/XXI/120). Such an accusation was particularly weighted, given Prunières stated purpose was to spread knowledge about music throughout the Francophone world, and not just in France. In June of that year, Le Bœuf advised Prunières to cut off contact with Lyr (Le Bœuf to Prunières, 8 June 1921. FHLB, Mus Ms 4147/XXI/139).

Auguste Getteman served as the regular Brussels correspondent for the paper, and in 1929, Hermann Closson took over the position.⁹⁶ The letters between Le Bœuf and Prunières had many layers, from Prunières's requests to Le Bœuf to find contributors and financial backers, to Le Bœuf's requests for Prunières's intervention on behalf of the Concerts Populaires to leading French performers such as Robert Casadesus.⁹⁷

In 1926, Le Bœuf helped to create a new association dedicated to the dissemination of Belgian art abroad. The Association Belge de Propagande Artistique à l'Étranger was established as an *asbl* on 5 November 1926 under the patronage of the Belgian government as part of the Département des Affaires Étrangères. This structure allowed for collaboration with foreign diplomats. A year later, Le Bœuf participated in the creation, and accepted the directorship, of another organization: the Fondation Rubens, the function of which Ernest Closson described as one that “permet d'envoyer à tour de rôle à Paris, pendant quelques semaines, de jeunes artistes belges.”⁹⁸ On 21 February 1927, the foundation was incorporated as an *asbl*, with Le Bœuf, Adolphe Max, and Henry de Traux de Wardin (representating the queen), among others, as its founders. The first recipients of funding from the foundation were composer André Souris, cellist Fernand Quinet, and Jules Clément.⁹⁹ Le Bœuf's correspondence indicates that he viewed (or that he hoped to market) the new organization as a means to ensure good music by Belgian

Much of Lyr's correspondence and many of his manuscripts are housed in the Fonds René Lyr, Archives de l'Art Moderne, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels.

⁹⁶Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 52–3.

⁹⁷Henry Le Bœuf to Henry Prunières, October 1922. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/XXI/194. For more on the relationship between Le Bœuf and Prunières, see Malou Haine, “Une amitié franco-belge: Henry Le Bœuf, Henry Prunières et la naissance de *La Revue musicale*,” in *Henry Prunières. Un musicologue engagé de l'entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Myriam Chimènes, Florence Gétreau, and Catherine Massip (Paris: Société française de musicologie, forthcoming).

⁹⁸Ernest Closson, “Henry Le Bœuf,” *Le Flambeau* 18, no. 2 (February 1935): 131.

⁹⁹Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 70.

composers would be available for his Concerts Populaires. In 1927, Le Bœuf wrote to Collaer, saying that he looked forward to receiving a symphonic work from Souris, who had left for Paris to study with a scholarship from the Fondations Rubens.¹⁰⁰

The recipients of the first year's scholarships, however, saw the advantages of participating in the new program in a different light. André Souris wrote to Paul Nougé about the award:

Monsieur Le Bœuf est naïf autant que généreux. Il veut m'ouvrir toutes les portes, me mettre en rapport avec Roussel, Ravel, Schmitt, même Honegger [...]. J'imagine assez bien le parti que je pourrais tirer des facilités pratiques qu'offrent ces relations [...]. Mais j'hésite encore. Le gros avantage de cette affaire réside dans la possibilité que j'aurais de travailler beaucoup et de nous faire entendre là-bas. Il y a aussi la *certitude* d'être joué l'hiver prochain aux Concerts Populaires. [...] L'occasion est unique et ne se présentera plus si je refuse. Tu penses bien que, quoi qu'il arrive, je sauvegarderai ma liberté.¹⁰¹

Although Nougé was convinced by Souris's argument for the importance of accepting the prize, many others including Hermann Closson, saw this move as the beginning of the composer's break with the Belgian surrealist circle.¹⁰²

In 1927, Le Bœuf organized yet another foundation, this time under his own name. The main focus was to establish a performing library that would be accessible to all Belgian musicians and concert associations (almost all of which had fallen under Le Bœuf's direct influence by the time of his death eight years later). The library included both standard repertoire and new works. Maurice Cuvelier, on behalf of Le Bœuf, sent letters to young Belgian composers soliciting submissions to the collection and explaining the terms for having their works included in the library. Le Bœuf's correspondence about the library, the surviving

¹⁰⁰Henry Le Bœuf to Paul Collaer, 3 March 1927. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/VI/29/136.

¹⁰¹Undated letter from either the end of 1926 or the beginning of 1927, published in Marcel Mariën, *La trotteuse* (Brussels: Les lèvres nues, 1993), 12. Quoted in Robert Wangermée, *André Souris et le complexe d'Orphée: entre surréalisme et musique sérielle* (Liège: Mardaga, 1995), 188–89.

¹⁰²Wangermée, *André Souris*, 119–20.

catalogue of symphonic works held in the collection, and some of the press coverage reveal a more complicated story, however, than that of disinterested philanthropy, which Le Bœuf fabricated for his project.

The terms for submitting new works to the collection, as were set out in letters to young Belgian composers, suggests that the new library was in direct response to Le Bœuf's difficulties with the Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Editeurs de Musique (SACEM) and would allow him to avoid paying publisher's fees associated with performing contemporary works. He began the collection by transferring the library of the Concerts Populaires to the Fondation Henry Le Bœuf, making the collection available for other musical organizations.¹⁰³ The next step was to add new works by Belgian composers to the collection. The foundation paid for copying orchestral parts for the new works, and in return, the copies as well as the scores became the property of the foundation. In effect, contributors to Le Bœuf's new library signed away some of their rights to the new work, agreeing that Le Bœuf reserved the right to program their music without paying royalties. Composers could, however, publish the works that they submitted to Le Bœuf should the opportunity arise.¹⁰⁴ Le Bœuf masked his self-interested goals for the Fondation by associating it closely to the goals of the Fondation Rubens. Among the first composers to be solicited for new works to contribute to the library was André Souris, who had won the Prix Rubens in February of 1927.¹⁰⁵

In order to ensure the quality of the new works included in his collection, Le Bœuf turned to his reliable stable of musical advisors, particularly Joseph Jongen and Paul Collaer. In a letter

¹⁰³Montens, *Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 62.

¹⁰⁴Le Bœuf explained these terms in a letter to Fernand Quinet, 17 August 1927. FHLB, KBR, Mus. Ms. 4147 XI/58/42.

¹⁰⁵Marcel Cuvelier to André Souris, 14 February 1927. FHLB, KBR, Mus. Ms. 4147/VI/29/118.

asking for a work for the collection from composer Jean Houwerckx in 14 February 1927, Cuvelier explained Le Bœuf's reason for maintaining a committee to judge the works:

N'ayez pas de crainte sur cette consultation, car Mr. Le Bœuf ne se préoccupe pas de rejeter des nouveautés, mais il désire, étant simple amateur, avoir l'opinion de professionnels sur la valeur de l'écriture de l'orchestration et sur la valeur musicale d'une œuvre qui doit être présentée au public et être jouée par nos musiciens.¹⁰⁶

It is evident, however, that Le Bœuf did not accept his committee's evaluations uncritically. In response to a letter from Collaer dated 27 February 1927 (which does not survive), for example, Le Bœuf's indicated that Collaer offered a frank evaluation of Marcel Poot as lazy and outdated. Le Bœuf's answer suggests questioned Collaer's opinion, and that he sympathized with the situation of the Belgian composers in a musical culture that placed value on works by international composers over those of native musicians: "Croyez-vous que ces compositeurs soient réellement paresseux? Je pense qu'ils ne composent pas parce qu'ils se voient peu de chances d'être joués, et surtout que le prix de copie, pour établir les parties de l'orchestre, dépasse leurs moyens."¹⁰⁷

Le Bœuf's defense of the young Belgian composers, and the long list of Belgian composers who had works included in the Fondation Henry Le Bœuf library, however, is not indicative of a larger initiative to program Belgian works in his concert series. The inclusion of a composition in the collection did not guarantee that it would ever be performed. The catalogue is a melting pot of works that made up the standard concert repertoire by d'Indy, Liszt, Mozart, Saint-Saëns, Tchaikovsky, and Wagner, all of which had been featured in pre-war Concerts Populaires concerts; new favorites in Brussels, including works by Albeniz, Bartok, de Falla, Fauré, Honegger, Igor Markevitch, Milhaud, Poulenc, Prokofieff, Rabaud, Rachmaninoff, Ravel,

¹⁰⁶Marcel Cuvelier to Jean Houwerckx, 14 February 1927. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/VI/29/119.

¹⁰⁷Henry Le Bœuf to Paul Collaer, 3 March 1927. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/VI/29/136.

and Stravinsky; and compositions by young Belgians including Gérard Bertouille (1898–1981), members of the Synthétistes (Poot, Maurice Schoemaker, and Francis de Bourguignon), the atonal composer Raymond Chevreuille (1901–76), and Jef Van Durme (1907–65).¹⁰⁸

“Quel puzzle et quel jeu d’échecs!”: Coordination of Musical Societies in Brussels

The Concerts Populaires faced a test in 1923, when orchestral musicians in Belgium staged a strike, as heavy taxes on concert organizations prevented higher wages for orchestral musicians.¹⁰⁹ At the beginning of the strike, in October 1923, a letter from Eugène Ysaÿe to *L’Eventail* appeared in the journal’s “Musique” column. Ysaÿe’s aligned himself with the concert organizers, writing from his unique perspective as both a performer and a series organizer:

Etant définitivement acquis que les concerts symphoniques sont supprimés en raison des intolérables exigences du Syndicat des musiciens, je tiens à remercier tout particulièrement les directions du Conservatoire, des Concerts Populaires et des Concerts Spirituels de l’esprit de solidarité qu’elles ont montré au cours des négociations.

En maintenant notre commune décision de refuser l’augmentation de 50 p.c. à laquelle on nous obligeait et qu’il était matériellement impossible d’accepter sans encourir des déficits encore plus considérables, nous avons non seulement défendu nos propres intérêts, mais aussi ceux du public dont la contribution aurait dû être majorée en conséquence.

La protection des pouvoirs publics nous faisant défaut, nos concerts grévés de taxes fiscales plutôt arbitraires, nos recettes forcément limitées par suite de l’exiguïté de la salle de concerts du Conservatoire, le déficit de près de 20,000 francs de la saison dernière, enfin les exigences du public quant au choix des solistes, tous ces éléments pris

¹⁰⁸Not surprisingly considering that Belgian tastes tended to run toward the French and Russian compositional styles of the twentieth century, composers of the Second Viennese school are not well-represented in the Fondation Henry Le Bœuf catalogue. Only Schoenberg’s *A Survivor from Warsaw*, written long after Le Bœuf’s death is listed. *Bibliothèque de la Fondation Henry Le Bœuf: catalogue des œuvres symphoniques* (Brussels: Société Philharmonique & Société des Concerts Populaires, n.d.).

¹⁰⁹Christopher Brent Murray discusses in the economics and the socio-political position of performers who worked under the regulations of the Syndicat des Artistes-Musiciens de la Belgique, the principal union for musicians, in “Rethinking Musical Life in Post-Armistice Brussels,” *Revue belge de musicologie/ Belgisch tijdschrift voor muziekwetenschap*, forthcoming. The strike did not prevent Collaer’s Concerts Pro Arte to offer a full season of chamber music during the 1923–24 season.

en considération on comprendra aisément que notre dévouement, notre désintéressement aient des limites...

Il est incontestable que le moment choisi par les musiciens pour nous imposer des conditions aussi exorbitantes est singulièrement inopportunes. En général, nous ne refuserons jamais d'examiner les moyens d'améliorer le sort des membres de l'orchestre, mais, au moins, qu'ils s'attendent que notre situation, à nous, le permette et elle ne le permettra que lorsque nous disposerons d'un local suffisamment spacieux pour que l'espoir nous reste de couvrir les frais d'organisation de nos concerts.

Et maintenant, en insistant sur le plaisir que j'ai eu personnellement à constater la solidarité des autres institutions symphoniques, c'est avec regret que nous avons tous nous déplorons qu'un nouveau venu n'ait pas cru devoir, pour des raisons à lui seul précieuses, se joindre à notre mouvement de légitime défense.

En présence de la généralité de notre protestation, il se devait de protéger à la fois le public et la musique comme nous entendons le faire, car, qu'on y réfléchisse bien, toutes ces tendances frondeuses atteindront l'art lui-même si l'on n'y prend garde.

Et pour finir, le public, souverain juge, verra de quel côté il doit diriger ses sentiments.¹¹⁰

A letter from "Un abonné des Concerts Populaires" printed in the music column of *L'Indépendance Belge* identifies the modernist aspirations of the concert series as one culprit for the stalemate between organizations and musicians:

Il est singulier que personne n'ait songé à la principale cause et, sinon, n'ait voulu la dénoncer. Cette cause réside dans le formidable personnel d'orchestre qu'exige la plupart des œuvres symphoniques à prétentions ultra-modernistes dont les concerts—on ne sait sous quelles pressions—ont abreuvé ces dernières années le bon public, au point de rendre la dose nocive.

[...]

Qu'on limite le choix des œuvres à donner aux auteurs 'jouables'... raisonnablement. Tant pis pour ceux qui ne se sont pas préoccupés de l'être.¹¹¹

The strike was resolved in March 1924, and the Concerts Populaires organized a truncated season of works that were already in its repertoire. These included Guillaume Lekeu's *Fantaisie sur deux airs angevins*, Albert Roussel's *Festin de l'araignée*, Wagner's *Murmures de la forêt* from *Siegfried*, and Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps*. The latter work quickly shifted from being a modernist curiosity to a staple of the society's repertoire. Though Le Bœuf's series

¹¹⁰"Musique," *L'Eventail*, 14 October 1923.

¹¹¹Ernest Closson, "Chronique musicale," *L'Indépendance Belge*, 22 October 1923.

emerged intact after the strike, the issues raised by musicians and audience members alike highlighted a concern in Brussels: that there were too many competing concert series for a small number of audience members. The concern was one that had also occupied critics, musicians, and organizers throughout the nineteenth century.

By 1927, Le Bœuf had taken it upon himself to find a viable solution.

He wrote about his plans for the upcoming season in a letter in March 1927, describing the process of coordinating music in Brussels: “Quel puzzle et quel jeu d’échecs!”¹¹² A delicate balancing act allowed the Concerts Populaires, Concerts Defauw, Concerts du Conservatoire, Concerts Pro Arte, and Concerts Ysaÿe to function side-by-side in Brussels. A letter to Charles Salmon, director of the Concerts Spirituels, indicates Le Bœuf’s careful cultivation of cordial relations with the directors of competing music organizations in order to protect his own interests and those of the Concerts Populaires, as well as—at least nominally—the interests of his fellow administrators. The spring of 1927 marked the beginning of a new phase for his administration of musical organizations in Brussels. For the next two seasons, he attempted to coordinate not only concert dates, but also repertoire with the other concert organizations in the city. In 1928, with the opening of the Palais des Beaux-Arts and the first season of his new Société Philharmonique, Le Bœuf was in a position to assert even more control over the organization of the city’s musical life and the orientation of the many disparate concert series because he had access to the resources the concert organizations needed most: performance space, positive public opinion, funding, and connections to influential people. The new order in Brussels drastically changed the “chess game” that Le Bœuf played.

¹¹²Henry Le Bœuf to Paul Collaer, 3 March 1927. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/VI/29/136.

CHAPTER 2: PAUL COLLAER AND THE CHAMBER MUSIC SCENE

Le milieu bruxellois, sous les dehors un peu amorphes, cache une très grande curiosité pour toutes les manifestations culturelles d'où qu'elles viennent. Ce que nous avons fait pour les Concerts Pro Arte n'est que la suite d'une tradition bruxelloise beaucoup plus ancienne qui remonte à Maurice Kufferath voire même à François Fétiis.¹

In an interview the year before his death in 1989, Paul Collaer situated his Concerts Pro Arte (1921–32) within the narrative that defined Brussels as a city with a long-standing tradition for supporting new music. In the same breath, he also connected his chamber music series to the work of François-Joseph Fétiis and Maurice Kufferath at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie (TRM) in the nineteenth century. Collaer positioned himself as a deliberate participant in the construction of the musical identity of the nation. Characterizations of Collaer as founder and director of the series, instigator, champion, and organizer often become tied up in histories of the city's cultural life in the period. As an “initiateur,” a “porte-parole, interprète et exégete,” an independent musician and patron, free from institutional and aesthetic loyalties, Collaer often serves as a convenient representative of the best of twentieth-century Belgian cultural sensibilities. His international connections, based on personal friendships and professional collaborations with such composers as Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, and Igor Stravinsky; with music critics, especially Charles Kœchlin; and his involvement in influencing programming at other Belgian musical organizations are central to discussions of his importance in Brussels. Collaer and his Concerts Pro Arte, therefore, slip easily into narratives about the deliberate

¹Quoted in Anne Van Malderen, “Historique et réception des diverses formations Pro Arte (1912–1947). Apport au répertoire de la musique contemporaine,” Ph.D. diss, Louvain-la-Neuve, 2012, 77.

construction of the city's and nation's identity as modern.² The familiar story of one concert series single-handedly defining the city's musical identity, however, emerged retrospectively, after Collaer received the coveted appointment as music director for the Flemish section of the Belgian national radio in 1936.

Collaer's concerts and his writing reveal a different perspective from that of Henry Le Bœuf. Le Bœuf's position as director of the Concerts Populaires compelled him to think about attracting audience interest and to reflect on the way the specific goals for his organizations would influence local musical identity as a whole. His engagement with modernist aesthetics and debates, therefore, was mediated by his concern for how local concert life would be informed by such discourse. Collaer, on the other hand, positioned himself in a broader European context at the beginning of the 1920s. He wrote reviews of concerts in Paris, forged friendships with foreign composers, and claimed that he eschewed any explicitly nationalist discussions in favor of consideration of good music, no matter its origin. His Concerts Pro Arte were based on this perspective. He had several close collaborators, but Collaer's fiercely independent stance ensured that Belgians and international critics and musicians alike generally understood the series to be "his."

Although Collaer and the Concerts Pro Arte, more than Le Bœuf and his organizations, have come to stand for the essence of musical life in Brussels between the wars, especially in musicological studies written in the late twentieth century, Collaer's concern with shaping the city's musical identity emerged in the 1930s, after the decline of the concert series.³ Coming

²Robert Wangermée, *La musique belge contemporaine* (Brussels: Renaissance du livre, 1959), 27; Valérie Dufour, *Strawinsky à Bruxelles, 1920–1960* (Brussels: Académie Royale de Belgique, 2003), 23.

³See, for instance, Paul Collaer, *Correspondance avec des amis musiciens*, ed. Robert Wangermée (Sprimont: Mardaga, 1996); Valérie Dufour, *Strawinsky à Bruxelles*; Jean-Pierre Muller, *Paul Collaer et Octave Maus: 70 ans d'avant-garde musicale à Bruxelles* (Brussels: RTBF, 1982); Robert Wangermée, *La musique belge contemporaine*;

from a relatively humble background, living outside of Brussels, and consciously orienting himself toward a cosmopolitan Parisian outlook in the 1920s, Collaer experienced relative isolation from the intellectual and social circles that shaped much of the Belgian capital's postwar cultural life. Such isolation gave him both with more independence and also with more financial and administrative problems than those faced by the Concerts Populaires, the Société Philharmonique and the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie (TRM). This chapter considers Collaer in a new light, framing him as an outsider for much of the interwar period, rather than the insider he would become after 1936, and showing that his reputation was based on his orientation toward Parisian cosmopolitan sensibilities. By offering the first analysis of Collaer's published critical writings in relation to his work as a concert organizer, I explain how and why Collaer positioned himself as a defender of new music and a critic of nationalist agendas. By considering the Concerts Pro Arte themselves—particularly in regard to the relationships that Collaer cultivated with performers, composers, and critics—I show how the reputation of the series developed in the 1920s parallel to Belgian national interests. Finally, I discuss the short-lived partnership of the Concerts Pro Arte and Le Bœuf's Société Philharmonique, as well as Collaer's work in the 1930s before his appointment at the radio, to show his increasing anxiety about his reputation and diminishing influence on both the local and international scenes.

Collaer, the Isolated Defender of Modern Music

In his writings—both published and unpublished—Collaer positioned himself as a defender of new music against a hostile majority who rejected musical modernity. The military connotations of the term *avant-garde* and the image of a valiant advocate for new ideas, who is independent

Robert Wangermée, "Paul Collaer, les Concerts Pro Arte et la musique du XX^e siècle," *Bulletin de la Classe des Beaux-Arts* 6, no.2 (1991): 11–39.

and forward-thinking in the face of conservative forces, were key to the construction of the ideal modern artist in the early twentieth century.⁴ Of the patrons who organized and directed public performances in Brussels, Collaer was the most concerned with questions of the aesthetics and language of modernism. With rhetoric that stressed the aggressive and lonely path of defending new musical styles, Collaer isolated himself from mainstream tastes and separated his concert series from the more conventional programming strategies that Le Bœuf adopted for the Concerts Populaires.

In 1974, contributing to the retrospective construction of his interwar reputation, Collaer emphasized the military connotations of the avant-garde and evoked the richness of the developing musical language at the beginning of the twentieth century. Citing Alban Berg, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, Sergey Prokofiev, Erik Satie, Arnold Schoenberg, and Anton Webern as the representative composers of the period (all of whom not only had premieres at the Concerts Pro Arte, but also came to Brussels for Collaer's concerts), Collaer wrote:

Ces compositeurs constituaient, au début de leur carrière, une véritable avant-garde, c'est-à-dire un petit groupe opérant en avant du gros de l'armée, en territoire ennemi. En ceci, cette avant-garde se distingue du mouvement actuel dit des "Musiques Nouvelles," qui s'adresse d'emblée à toute une génération de jeunes auditeurs qui lui donne, par principe, son accord.⁵

Collaer participated in the "véritable avant-garde" as a critic and as performer. In 1939, he wrote in abstract terms of his experience as a pianist who dedicated himself to new music, describing the challenges that came from all fronts in response to his selection of repertoire:

⁴See Matei Calinescu, "The Two Modernities," in *Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 41–46; Jann Pasler, "A Sociology of the Apaches: 'Sacred Battalion' for *Pelléas*," in *Berlioz and Debussy: Sources, Contexts and Legacies. Essays in Honor of François Lesure*, ed. Barbara L. Kelly and Kerry Murphy (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 149–166.

⁵Paul Collaer, "Darius Milhaud: Pour célébrer son 80^e anniversaire," *Orbis Musicae, Studies in Musicology* 2, no. 3–4 (1973–74): 15.

[Le pianiste] ne doit pas compter sur la sympathie du public, car il dérange ce public dans ses habitudes, sa façon de penser, ses goûts. S'il joue des œuvres français, on l'accusera bientôt d'être 'vendu à la France'. S'il joue Hindemith, on se gênera pas pour écrire qu'il est 'vendu aux Boches'; les deux reproches pouvant d'ailleurs être adressés par les mêmes personnes à un même artiste, au cours de la même quinzaine. Les compositeurs dont il ne joue pas les œuvres lui vouèrent une haine corse. Il passera des semaines à étudier une suite, un concerto, que personne n'a joué avant lui et qu'il ne pourra pas inscrire à son répertoire courant, à cause de la difficulté de mise au point ou de l'indifférence du public. Mille scrupules viendront compliquer son travail, car il aborde des œuvres sans être guidé par une tradition d'interprétation.⁶

This description of playing new music in the face of objections from the audience, accusations of fickleness from critics, and difficulties in the music itself portray the kind of isolation that Collaer experienced—by his own design and as a result of his social standing—not only as a pianist, but also as a critic and a concert organizer in Brussels.

As *Le Bœuf* had done more than a decade before him, Collaer integrated himself into the intellectual culture of the ULB when he began his study of chemistry in 1905. Though his formal musical training in piano and harmony ended when he matriculated at the university, Collaer took advantage of the musical offerings in the city, and particularly of performances of new music.⁷ As a student at the ULB he had access to elite circles from which he would have been excluded otherwise due to his socio-economic position as a member of the bourgeoisie. Collaer's chosen field of study at the university, however, may have separated him from his peers who were studying law and medicine and who tended to be from wealthier families. Although his pedigree could not allow him access to the social world outside of the university, Collaer had the opportunity to cultivate himself as a member of the intellectual elite during his studies. Collaer took it upon himself to write to Octave Maus, requesting free tickets to the *Libre Esthétique's*

⁶Paul Collaer, "Le pianisme d'avant-garde," *La Revue internationale de musique* 1, no. 5–6 *Le Piano* (April 1939): 899.

⁷Collaer studied piano performance and took harmony classes at the *École de Musique de Mechelen* before he entered the university.

concerts for himself and his friends, so that they might “rendre compte des œuvres nouvelles avant de les exécuter [eux] mêmes.”⁸ With these friends, Collaer performed in concerts for the socialist Fédérations Postcolaires and the Universités Populaires in Brussels, Ghent, and Mechelen. In the 1920s, Collaer acknowledged the influence that Maus’s programs had on his own concerts. He wrote to Maus’s wife that “...l’effort que je fournis dans le domaine musical, je le fais avec les yeux fixés sur l’exemple d’Octave Maus, exemple dont je me réclame en toutes circonstances.”⁹

Collaer’s studies and his performances for civilian audiences were cut short with the outbreak of World War I. He was assigned to the Compagnie des Sergeants Mariniers. In addition to his military duties, he performed for Belgian soldiers in hospitals and those who were coming back from the front. He collaborated with the French soprano Claire Croiza and the Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe on these concerts. After contracting an infection, Collaer was sent to convalesce in Switzerland in 1917. During his time there, he met with musicians with whom he had built relationships in Belgium, including Croiza, and dedicated himself to studying new works.¹⁰

Among the scores Collaer studied was Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du printemps*, which had not yet been performed in Belgium when war broke out. As a student in Brussels, Collaer had eagerly awaited reviews from Paris after the 1913 premiere and had studied the score. In Switzerland, he had the time to continue his analysis. In 1923, writing an article anticipating the

⁸Quoted in Jean-Pierre Muller, *Paul Collaer et Octave Maus*, 21.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰See, for example, Croiza’s letters to Collaer starting in 1917, in the Fonds et Elsa Paul Collaer (FPC), Bibliothèque royale de Belgique/ Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België (KBR), Brussels, Mus. Ms. 3972/799–820. In a letter dated 8 April 1917, after visiting him, Croiza wrote to the convalescing Collaer: “J’ai été si heureuse de vous voir un peu tranquillement loin du bruit de tous [...] avec tout ce que nous aimons, de notre chère musique” (Mus. Ms. 3971/799).

Brussels premiere of the concert version, Collaer reflected on the rift between his admiration for Stravinsky (and other avant-garde composers) and the attitudes of older generations about the new style of music:

Comme je la relisais [la partition du *Sacre*] avec cet amour spécial qu'on porte aux choses aimées dont on fut longtemps séparé, je reçus la visite d'un professeur de Conservatoire. Avec une profonde pitié pour mon mauvais goût, et d'un air protecteur, il me conseilla 'de ne pas m'occuper d'aussi mauvaise musique'. J'ajoute que ce même dédain s'adressait aux partitions de *Pénélope*, du trio de Ravel et de la *Sonate* de violon de Debussy, que j'avais sous la main.

Le dédain de cette âme étriquée d'une part; d'autre part, la grandeur de mes souvenirs et le génie de Strawinsky formaient un contraste d'une drôlerie que je ne crois pas devoir oublier jamais. Le mépris des esprits médiocres pour les grands ouvrages de la pensée et de la sensibilité de leur temps, est typique: il se retrouve à toutes les époques de l'histoire.¹¹

This anecdote reflects Collaer's construction of his public persona: one who was a defender of new music against the mediocrity of those (and especially those connected to the establishment) who summarily rejected new works without study, based only on prejudices against the avant-garde. More than any other figure in Brussels, Collaer positioned himself in direct opposition to those who rejected new styles.

Furthermore, Collaer's writing suggests that his experience fighting in the war was tied up with his identity as a defender of new music. He recalled a particularly defining moment during his time at the front in his 1923 article on *Le Sacre du printemps*:

Isolé au milieu du bruit effroyable de la bataille, entouré des cadavres de mes camarades, en une de ces heures où on acquiert l'expérience que n'ont même pas les vieillards, j'entendis nettement la musique du *Sacre*. [...] la musique du *Sacre*, en un pareil moment, ne me soit pas apparue diminuée, mais au contraire grandie mille fois: qu'elle me parût à ce moment même, et avec une acuité ne laissant place à aucun doute, être l'expression exacte et magnifique de ce que je vivais, est une preuve *humaine* de sa grandeur, preuve qui reste pour moi la plus belle et la plus émouvante.¹²

¹¹Paul Collaer, "Le Sacre du Printemps," *Arts et lettres d'aujourd'hui* 1, no. 17 (29 April 1923): 373.

¹²*Ibid.*, 371–79.

It was with great satisfaction, therefore, that Collaer observed the new music that he had defended and that resonated with his war-time experiences coming into its own. A year after his article on *Le Sacre du printemps*, for instance, he reviewed the 1923–24 Parisian season, which included the first production of Poulenc’s *Les Biches*, Stravinsky’s concerto for piano and winds, and Satie’s *Salade*. Collaer declared:

La jeune génération, celle des artistes d’après-guerre, a fini par conquérir la totalité du public. Aujourd’hui l’art des jeunes est compris et aimé [...] Parmi les musiciens, Satie, Milhaud, Auric, Poulenc et Honegger se sont enfin imposés dans l’esprit des gens, aux côtés de Strawinsky.

Les ‘fumistes’ d’il y a quatre ans sont aujourd’hui acclamés, couronnés. C’est l’heure des brusques et inexplicables revirements d’opinion de la part de la Grande Critique (ne l’avais-je point prédit ici même en octobre dernier?). Ceux qui ont mené le bon combat se réjouissent. La bataille fut rude, mais elle est gagnée. N’avait-on point mêlé aux polémiques entourant le mouvement actuel, des questions de nationalité, de race et même de religion? Mais tout cela est oublié. Les pires ennemis d’hier mettent les pouces.¹³

After only a few years of concerted work to defend new work, Collaer observed the first signs of success in his battle—at least in Paris.

Chamber Music in Brussels

The years between Collaer’s return to Brussels after the war, in 1919, and the publication of this review of Parisian musical life in 1924 were formative for his positioning within the city’s musical life. He completed his degree at the ULB and accepted a position as a chemistry teacher in nearby Mechelen. He also participated as a pianist in concerts in Brussels, and through these performances, Collaer met many of the musicians with whom he would later collaborate at the Concerts Pro Arte. However, as a modest teacher, Collaer remained at the fringes of the capital’s social elite.

¹³Paul Collaer, “La saison de Paris,” *Arts et lettres d’aujourd’hui* 2, no. 23 (15 June 1924): 543–44.

Chamber-music concerts and recitals had been a vital part of the effort to keep the musical life in Brussels functioning during the German occupation, and following the war, concerts organized by management agencies, intellectual circles, and social organizations flourished. Octave Maus died shortly after Belgium's liberation, and La Libre Esthétique did not resume its activities after the war, leaving a space for new concert organizations to claim leadership in the performance of chamber music.¹⁴ The Zimmer Quartet continued to give performances both in public spaces and for private salons.¹⁵ The Cercle Artistique et Littéraire and the Concerts Nobles revived their series of lectures and concerts for members, and the Salle de l'Union Coloniale (also called the Salle Patria), which had been the venue for public concerts organized by Belgians during the war, continued to see a rotation of programs sponsored by such management houses as the Maison Chester and the Maison Fernand Lauwreyns.¹⁶ Additionally,

¹⁴Maus was in England when Germany invaded Belgium in 1914. He spent the war in Switzerland, helping Belgian refugees in Switzerland. He returned to Brussels after the war, but did not re-constitute his artistic society. He died in Brussels on 24 November 1919. Jean-Pierre Muller insinuates that Collaer was one of the Belgians who Maus helped during his time in Switzerland (*Paul Collaer et Octave Maus*, 22).

¹⁵Violinist Albert Zimmer (1874–1940), a student of Eugène Ysaÿe, accepted the position of second violin in Ysaÿe's quartet when Ysaÿe was on tour in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. It was in this capacity that Zimmer performed for the Libre Esthétique. He formed his own quartet in 1896, with Edouard Brahy as cellist. After Brahy's hand injury that led him to his conducting career, Emile Doehaerd replaced him. The quartet toured Spain, Italy, North Africa, and Mexico in the 1920s. In Brussels, the group performed with some of the leading visiting musicians: In 1922, for instance, they collaborated with Wanda Landowska for a concert at the Conservatoire (27 January 1922), followed by another concert later in the year with Claire Croiza featuring works of Ravel (25 March 1922). The quartet continued to perform through the end of the 1939 season. In 1908, Zimmer created a Bach society under the patronage of the Countess de Flandre. The society continued its activity through 1914. During the final year of the war, Zimmer directed benefit concerts for the Comité International de Secours Imédiats aux Éprouvés de la Guerre at the Union Coloniale. In 1921, Zimmer became a professor of violin at the Conservatoire Royale de Bruxelles, a position he held until his retirement in 1939. Jean Bosquet, "Zimmer, Jacques Théodore Albert." In *La Nouvelle Biographie Nationale* vol. 2 (Brussels: Académie Royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique, 1990), 391–93.

¹⁶The Fonds Fauconnier at the Archives de la Ville de Bruxelles (AVB) includes an extensive collection of programs from the period of German occupation in Brussels (Box 63). Paul Gilson, Michel Brusselmans, and Emile Bosquet organized many of the wartime concerts. The Union Coloniale, a large complex, on Rue Stassart near the Porte de Namur, opened on 13 May 1914. For more on the opening ceremonies, see "Dns le monde de l'industrie et de la finance," *Le Soir*, 17 May 1914. Arthur Van Dooren's short-lived concert series Heures de Musique took place at the Salle de l'Union Coloniale. The last of the three concerts for the 1922–23 season was billed as a concert of "musique moderne." ("Musique," *L'Eventail*, 29 October 1922).

academic institutions, and especially the Institut des Hautes Études (IHE) and the Esthétique Nouvelle, offered concerts as part of their series of public lectures on the arts, politics, and social concerns.

The IHE, a continuing-education organization, offered lectures on a variety of topics, including economics, art, history, and music. After the war, the musical events offered by the IHE, organized largely by Charles Van den Borren and Lallah Vandervelde, focused mainly on early music and new music.¹⁷ Collaer participated in both the December 1919 concert dedicated to works by Les Six and the March 1920 concert devoted to Stravinsky's music at the IHE.¹⁸ *Le Soir*, reporting on the Stravinsky concert, used sensationalist language to describe the composer's idiom: "Sa musique vous fait violence et vous oblige à devenir acteur. Elle choque le simple amateur, mais finit par le vaincre à la seconde ou troisième audition."¹⁹ New music's potential to win over the public become a theme throughout Collaer's career—not only when championing Stravinsky, but in broader terms as well.

In 1921, a new artistic circle emerged, claiming to be the continuation of Les XX and La Libre Esthétique. Robert Sand organized gatherings at the Galerie Giroux, which featured art

¹⁷For more on the history of the Université Nouvelle and the IHE in Brussels, see Andrée Despy-Meyer, *Inventaire des Archives de l'Université Nouvelle de Bruxelles (1894–1919) déposées aux Archives de l'Université Libre de Bruxelles* (Brussels: Archives et Bibliothèques de Belgique, 1973). Copies of the programs are included in the Fonds Fauconnier, AVB, Box 71.

¹⁸The concert of works by Les Six took place on 19 December 1919 and included a pre-concert lecture by Jean Cocteau. Georges Auric, Darius Milhaud, and Germaine Tailleferre also attended. The concert, organized by Charles Van den Borren and Lallah Vandervelde featured excerpts from the four-hand transcription of Satie's *Parade*, Milhaud's violin sonata no. 2 (op. 15), a quartet by Louis Durey, four mélodies by Honegger, *Chandelles romaines* for four-hand piano by Honegger, *Pastorale* by Tailleferre, and *Rhapsodie nègre* by Poulenc. The Stravinsky concert on 20 March 1920 included excerpts from *Petrushka* and *Le Sacre du printemps* in piano transcription, *Cinq pièces faciles* performed by Collaer and pianist Constantin Prion, as well as *Trois poésies de la lyrique japonaise*, *Pastorale*, and excerpts from *Le Rossignol*. The evening also included a lecture by Piron on Stravinsky's music. Paul Collaer, *Correspondences*, 65n.1; Wangermée, "Paul Collaer, les Concerts Pro Arte," 21n.13; Robert Wangermée, *Musique belge contemporaine*, 33.

¹⁹"Conférence audition consacrée à Igor Strawinsky," *Le Soir*, 18 March 1920.

exhibitions, lectures, and concerts. May de Rudder described the music performed at the concerts as “parfois plus ingénieuse ou bizarre que vraiment harmonieuse et expressive, mais aussi quelques fortes et belles pages.”²⁰ Sand’s concerts included one dedicated to the music of Les Six and another to Erik Satie’s music, both in April 1921. The circle boasted pre-concert lectures on music by Jean Cocteau, Jules Destrée, Henry Prunières, and Erik Satie.²¹

The group’s connection to its nineteenth-century predecessors was explicit. Among the first lectures offered was Jules Destrée’s presentation on Octave Maus. Destrée had recently accepted his position as the head of the city’s Ministère des Sciences et des Arts, which oversaw government funding for cultural activities. In his lecture, he offered the closest thing to an official consecration of the new group as the continuation of nineteenth-century tradition.

L’Eventail reported:

Qu’on ait célébré Octave Maus, l’autre samedi, dans ces salles de *l’Esthétique nouvelle* où se continue son effort de jadis, ne serait point étonnant, si cette soirée n’avait été l’occasion d’un spectacle unique dans l’histoire de nos lettres et de notre gouvernement: celui d’un ministre des Arts consacrant à célébrer les Arts une heure entière, faite d’intelligence et de dévotion. Si l’on songe qu’au temps où il fondait *les XX*, et *l’Art Moderne*, et *la Libre Esthétique*, Octave Maus était un révolutionnaire, ennemi de tout officialisme, on aura la mesure de l’étonnement que d’aucuns purent éprouver en écoutant M. Destrée.²²

Though Collaer collaborated on some of the concerts for the Esthétique Nouvelle, he demurred when the organization invited him to take on a more official position. Collaer was perhaps wary of the symbolic association between the group and the government through Destrée’s participation. For Collaer, Maus’s success as a champion of new art was both an inspiration and challenge. He was in a delicate position in which he walked a fine line between

²⁰May de Rudder, “Musique,” *L’Eventail*, 22 May 1921.

²¹Programs from the Galeries Giroux are included in the Fonds Fauconnier, AVB, Box 71.

²²“Notes de la Semaine,” *L’Eventail*, 29 May 1921.

aligning himself with the philosophies that had helped put Brussels on the artistic map in the nineteenth century and forging his own post-war conception of “good” modern music. The Esthétique Nouvelle’s continued orientation toward what Collaer considered outdated styles of the first decade of the twentieth century (particularly the franckisme and post-franckisme that marked the pre-war concerts of Les XX and la Libre Esthétique) did not align with his focus on post-war idioms.²³ His resistance to becoming involved with the Esthétique Nouvelle is one of the first moments during his interwar career in which he isolated himself from mainstream musical life in Brussels and the musicians and organizers who shaped it.

At the same time that Collaer was establishing his footing in chamber music in Brussels by performing in various concerts, Le Bœuf was creating his own chamber-music series under the auspices of the Concerts Populaires. The Concerts Régence, which took place in the auditorium of the Conservatory on the Rue de la Régence, focused on works for smaller ensembles, and particularly on early music and new pieces for smaller performing forces. Pierre Janlet explained to Claire Croiza: “Ces concerts permettraient de faire entendre des œuvres anciennes que l’orchestre des Concerts Populaires ne pourrait exécuter sans les écraser, ainsi les Symphonies de Mozart.”²⁴ Among the first performances Le Bœuf envisioned for this smaller series was the double bill of Claudio Monteverdi’s *Couronnement de Poppée* and Claude Debussy’s *Damoiselle élue*, with Claire Croiza singing the title roles and with staging by Jules Delacre of the Théâtre du Marais.²⁵ Other performances at the Concerts Régences included a

²³Collaer wrote to his protégé, Belgian composer André Souris, on 22 October 1925: “Vivre est le principal. L’art moderne, on s’en fout. Tous les épigones de Schoenberg sont dénués d’intérêt.” *Correspondance*, 218.

²⁴Pierre Janlet (Henry Le Bœuf’s secretary) to Croiza, 23 September 1923. Fonds Henry Le Bœuf (FHLB), Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique/ Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België (KBR), Brussels. Mus. Ms. 4147/XXI/7/9.

²⁵Le Bœuf proposed this collaborative project with Delacre’s new theater in a letter dated 22 October 1921. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/XXI/7/39. The edition that the Concerts Populaires used for this performance of the Monteverdi was d’Indy’s 1905 orchestration supplemented by sections completed by Charles Van den Borren and orchestrated by

recital by Wanda Landowska in January 1922, a program of Scarlatti, Rameau, Boiëldieu, Cimerosa in 1922, as well as many Bach performances.

Such early-music performances fit into a broader modernist project of exploring the unfamiliar, with pre-classical works billed as “unknown” treasures of the past. In 1927, for example, Collaer himself proposed a performance of Monteverdi’s *Vespro della Beata Vergine* for the series, perhaps because his own Concerts Pro Arte did not have the resources to mount such a production. He wrote to Le Bœuf: “C’est d’une ‘nouveauité’ extraordinaire, comme toute le Monteverde du reste quand il est présenté dans sa version originale.”²⁶ Seven years later, when he was particularly dedicated to studying and performing early music, Collaer compared the experience of listening to early music with that of hearing new music, pointing out that the same listeners who rejected one tended to reject the other. He pointed out that both new and early music require the listener to work to understand it, as there was limited critical writing to help shape their impressions: “L’œuvre contemporaine et l’œuvre ancienne se présentent à l’auditeur sans intermédiaires, dans la surprenante nouveauté de leur langage, de leur manière d’être.” For that reason Collaer described the process of making oneself open to the unfamiliar sounds to get closer to the music: “Il nous faut dépenser notre propre force, faire appel à notre propre sensibilité, faire table rase de ce que nous avons appris et nous offrir avec toutes nos forces vitales si nous voulons retrouver le contact avec eux.”²⁷

Raymond Moolaert. “Le troisième Concert Populaire (Série Régence). Le Couronnement de Poppée de A. [sic] Monteverdi,” *L’Eventail*, 8 April 1923. In 1922, Le Bœuf suggested that the double bill serve as the first post-war performance at the theater in the Château de Laeken for the queen’s court. For more on Le Bœuf’s relationship with the royal family, see chapter 4.

²⁶Paul Collaer to Henry Le Bœuf, 22 March 1927. FHLB, KBR, Mus. Ms. 4147/VI/29/152. For more on links between modernist thought and the early music revival, see Henry Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: A History* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1988).

²⁷Paul Collaer, “Défense de la musique contemporaine,” *Les Beaux-Arts*, 16 March 1934. By 1934, Collaer was involved in collaborations with Charles Van den Borren, Safford Cape, and other specialists of early music. They

At the Concerts Régence, early music continued to appear side-by-side with new compositions. In March 1923, for instance, the Madrigaal-Vereeniging of Amsterdam performed works by Roland de Lassus and Claude le Jeune on the same program that featured Joseph Jongen's *Tableaux pittoresques* (written in 1917, but only premiered in London several months before this Brussels performance), Maurice Ravel's *Pavane pour une Infante défunte*, and Desiré Emile Inghelbrecht's *La Nursery* (completed in 1911). The series continued through the end of the 1926–27 season, around the time that Collaer and Le Bœuf began negotiating a partnership between the Concerts Pro Arte and the Société Philharmonique.

The collection of programs from the interwar years at the Archives de la Ville de Bruxelles reveals the abundance of concert series featuring chamber music between the World Wars. In addition to the performances at the IHE, the Esthétique Nouvelle, and the Concerts Régence, there were performances organized by the Concerts Ysaÿe, the Union des Anciennes Élèves de l'École Normale de Bruxelles, the Concerts Chester, the Concerts Historiques, Arthur van Dooren's Les Heures de Musique, the Maison Jean Delvigne, the Maison Fernand Lauwreyns and performances by amateur groups.²⁸ Given the diversity and abundance of concerts, many of them organized by leading musicians who had established themselves in Brussels either immediately before, during, or right after the war, the rise of Collaer's Concerts Pro Arte to the status as the premiere chamber music organization in the city is remarkable.

staged productions of early operas and arranged concerts that included Renaissance and Baroque repertoire. For more discussion on the role of early music in modernist discourse, see Jeanice Brooks, *The Musical Work of Nadia Boulanger: Performing Past and Future between the Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Annegret Fauser, "The Scholar behind the Medal: Edward J. Dent (1876–1957) and the Politics of Music History," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 139, no. 2 (2014): 235–60. For more on uses of the early music revival as a nationalist tool, see Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past: Early Music in Nineteenth Century France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

²⁸See Collection des Archives Privées, AVB, Box 177; Fonds Fauconnier, AVB, Box 79.

***Het Overzicht* and Modernism**

At the end of an evening of drinking at the Taverne Astra in Brussels in December 1922, the nineteen year-old composer E.L.T. Mesens wrote a letter to Paul Collaer on the tavern's stationery. Collaer had recently published an article criticizing a group of young Flemish composers in the art review *Het Overzicht*. Mesens's letter was direct: "Monsieur Collaer, Je vous préviens qu'il est temps de vous taire, tant à mon sujet qu'à celui de mes confrères et amis."²⁹ Though Mesens never sent the letter, it is indicative of the general backlash that Collaer received for one of his early articles on modernism and nationalism in music.

Collaer asserted his persona as a music critic at the same time that he established his reputation as a performer in various concert series in Brussels. He had written a handful of articles about music before the war, but became a prolific journalist upon his return to Belgium in 1919. In 1922, his *He Overzicht* article, "De Vlaamse Toonkunst," coincided with the opening performance of the first full season of the Concerts Pro Arte, as well as the increasing tensions between Flemish- and French-speaking populations over debates about higher education in Belgium and its political ramifications. The editors of the journal had invited him to write the article to appear in anticipation of a festival of a Flemish music in Antwerp. It was among the first of Collaer's publications on modern music. It was also one of only a handful of texts that he wrote in Flemish and, most importantly, the only article he wrote before 1945 that addressed the character of Flemish music.³⁰ Despite the article's title, the question of a distinct Flemish musical

²⁹E.L.T. Mesens to Paul Collaer, no date. Archives Mesens-Nicole Dubucq, Brussels. Robert Wangermée consulted this private collection when he was preparing his edition of Mesens's writings on music. See E.L.T. Mesens, *Moi je suis musicien: écrits sur la musique*, ed. Robert Wangermée (Brussels: Didier Devillez, 1998), 31. A third letter from Mesens and Jules Perceval to Collaer exists, in which the two composers challenge Collaer to a duel, is part of the E.L.T. Mesens Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, Box 1, Folder 11.

³⁰Collaer did, however, present a lecture on new Flemish music at the Second Congress of Modern Art in Antwerp in January 1922. His lecture may have included some discussion of E.L.T. Mesens's music. On 30 November 1921, Collaer wrote to Mesens to remind the composer to send him manuscripts so that he might have a chance to study

identity was not Collaer's central concern. He worried more about the weaknesses he identified in the works of young composers.

The article proved to be one of the most provocative during Collaer's career as a critic. In it, he made sweeping claims: "Flemish music currently does not exist,"³¹ and "far from being competent in construction, our young musicians know absolutely nothing of their craft."³² The story of Collaer's article exposes a crisis at the heart of Belgian cultural identity as a nation that emphasized its orientation toward cosmopolitanism and modernism. He framed the first part of his article as a comparison of two moments in the history of music in Flanders. On the one hand, he argued that the meeting of the "staid, sedate, and industrious" local character of the "calm, meditative mind of the Fleming" with the Latinate tastes of the Italian popes and French kings in the fifteenth century produced a golden age for Flemish music.³³ He compared the importance of Guillaume Dufay, Johannes Ockeghem, Jacob Obrecht, Josquin des Prez, Adrian Willaert, Clément Jannequin, and other Franco-Flemish composers to the obscurity of Flemish musicians in the late nineteenth century.³⁴ Led by Peter Benoit and Jan Blockx in the 1880s, many turned to traditional Flemish folk songs for their music. Collaer wrote that this self-conscious push to

them before this lecture. See Paul Collaer to E.L.T. Mesens, 30 November 1921, in Collaer, *Correspondance*, 91–92.

³¹"de vlaamse muziek bestaat heden niet." Paul Collaer, "De Vlaamse Toonkunst," *Het Overzicht* 13 (November 1922): 3. I am very grateful to Thomas Neiryck for his help with these translations.

³²"Verre van tot enige konstruktie bekwam te zijn weten onze jonge musici absoluut niets af hun stiel." *Ibid.*, 4.

³³"bedaarde bezadige en werzame vlamingen," "de kalme mediatieve geest van de vlaming." Collaer, "De Vlaamse-Toonkunst," 3.

³⁴The tradition of claiming that the Renaissance Franco-Flemish culture was a foundation for modern Belgium in reaches as far back as studies of early music by François-Joseph Fétis and François-August Gevaert. Among Collaer's contemporaries who perpetuated this narrative were Ernest Closson and Charles Van den Borren. See especially Van den Borren's "Du rôle international de la Belgique de l'histoire musicale," *Mitteilungen der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Musikwissenschaft/ Bulletin de la Société Internationale de la Musicologie* 2, no. 4 (October 1930): 110–112. For more on Fétis and Gevaert, see Katharine Ellis, *Interpreting the Musical Past: Early Music in Nineteenth-Century France*, 120–21, 148–53.

develop a musical Flemish subnationalism produced a dangerous inward-looking attitude, the result of which was music that might be successful as a political statement, but could not be called art. Collaer dismissed Benoit's *Rubenscantate* and Blockx's *Vlaamsche dansen* for their "sterile particularism," and accused Flemish composers of withdrawing from the international influences that had been so productive in the Renaissance.³⁵ Like the editorial board of *Het Overzicht* that affirmed its vision for Flemish nationalism with their mantra: "Through self-knowledge to Knowledge; through self-emancipation to world-emancipation,"³⁶ Collaer advocated for a "broad-minded nationalism," that allowed for an international view of the world while preserving Flemish identity.

The most indignant responses to "De Vlaamse Toonkunst" came from Belgian nationalists who focused on Collaer's cosmopolitan view in the first part of the article, rather than the details about musical style in the second half. Their reactions had very little to do with Collaer's claims. One of the first published responses, for example, indicated the deeply ingrained anxiety over the perceived inferiority of Belgian cultural life after World War I. The unsigned article appeared in in the Francophone journal *7 Arts* in late December 1922. The journal, founded in 1922, espoused a Francophone Belgian nationalist agenda as well as an aggressively modernist position; for the editors, modern Belgium only existed as a whole,

³⁵"steriel parkuklarism" Collaer, "De Vlaamse Toonkunst," 3. Collaer did not discuss the influences of Wagner, Liszt, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn in these works, perhaps in order to strengthen his argument that Flemish composers of the nineteenth century were inward-looking. Collaer's article focused exclusively on compositional aesthetics. He did not point out the key role that Benoit played in establishing Flemish-language music education. In 1877, Benoit founded the Flemish Music School in Antwerp, which was closely tied to the Flemish Movement's push to establish Flemish as an official language of instruction. In 1898, the school became the Royal Flemish Conservatory. Benoit was also instrumental in the founding of the Nederlandsch Lyrisch Toneel in 1890, which became the Vlaamsche Opera in 1893. Marie-Thérèse Buysens, "Peter Benoit," *Grove Music Online*, accessed 8 December 2012.

³⁶"Manifest-Inleiding," *Het Overzicht* 1 (15 June 1921): 1–2.

unified within, and independent from foreign powers. The article accused Collaer of being an amateur and a xenophile:

Dans le numéro de novembre, un professeur de *chimie*, délaissant de laboratoire pour manipuler les touches d'un piano, *parle de la musique moderne en Belgique* !
Il dit, sans s'émouvoir aucunement :

*Musique belge,
n'existe pas !³⁷*

This review, most likely written by Georges Monier, the journal's music editor, took advantage of a fundamental slippage in Collaer's language—between the Flemish and the Belgian cultural identities—to concentrate on the question of a national musical identity. In “De Vlaamse Toonkunst,” Collaer wrote: “Our country (*land*) bridges influences from only two nations (*landen*): Germany, which gives us our Germanic mindset, and France, for reasons of our inherited Latin spirit.”³⁸ Even though Collaer never mentioned Belgium by name, his language referred to the contested and hybrid cultural context of the nation as a whole, even though the article purported to focus specifically on music in Flanders.

In the second section of the article, Collaer focused on the shortcomings of a small group of composers (Mesens, Monier, Albert van Bayaens, and Lode Vets, among others), who reacted against the particularism of the Flemish music of the 1880s by copying modern French and German styles. Collaer framed the young composers' reaction as a failure because their music shows no true understanding of the principles behind the compositional techniques they borrowed. He argued that in order to be effective, a composer must study history, so as to

³⁷“Revue de la presse: *Het Overzicht*, revue mensuelle,” 7 *Arts* 1, no. 9 (28 December 1922): 3. Emphasis in the original.

³⁸“Ons land kan slechts door twee landen beïnvloed worden: Duitsland, uit oorzaak van onze Germaanse geesteswending, Franckrijk om rede van onze overgeerfde latiniteit.” Collaer, “De Vlaamse Toonkunst,” 3.

understand the sources of the new ideas and techniques that they are so eager to borrow. He wrote of young musicians:

When they hear the magnificent music of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Satie, these uninformed young people imagine that all these novelties sweep away the old tradition. They do not realize that the new music has an extremely strong tradition as its source. A new, even more original and stricter technique was built with amazing audacity upon this strong tradition.³⁹

The question of a particularly Flemish character in music disappeared completely in the second half of the article as Collaer emphasized a more global problem: the education of a new generation of musicians. The result of young composers' incomplete understanding was a set of banal, derivative works that lack the "rationale of all the daring power of the great contemporary composers."⁴⁰ For example, he panned *Golem* by Lode Vets, one of the three pieces that *Het Overzicht* published in the same issue as Collaer's article, for its "un-styled banality," unlike that of Poulenc, from whom Vets borrowed the idea. Collaer wrote: "Under such conditions it is not worth it to write it down, and especially not to give it the title 'music' in the first place."⁴¹ His solution for the problem was for some (Mesens and Monier) to return to conservatory classes to study the tradition that they did not understand. Others (Vets and Bayaens), he believed, were a lost cause and would "do better to choose a craft other than composition."⁴²

³⁹"Wanneer ze de prachtige muziek van Schoenberg, Stravinsky en Satie horen verbeelden zich die jonge ontwetenden dat al deze nieuwigheid de oude traditie wegvaagt. Zij beseffen niet dat die nieuwe muziek juist een uiterst sterke traditie als bron heeft. Op deze sterke rotsvaste stof wordt met verbazende durkfracht een techniek gebouwd die oorspronkelijker en nog strenger is dan de oude." Ibid., 4.

⁴⁰"de durftkracht der hedendaagse groote komponisten." Ibid.

⁴¹"Onder dergelijke voorwaarden was het niet de moeite waard ze neer te schrijven, en vooral niet toegelaten de titel 'muziek' voorop te stellen." Ibid.

⁴²"De overigen deden beter 'n andere siel te kiezen dan die van komponist." Ibid., 4.

Letters from France reflect a variety of responses to the second half of the article.⁴³ In an enigmatic note dated November 26, Satie wrote: "...Que me dites-vous de vos jeunes musiciens? Vous ne voulez donc pas leur faire crédit?... Sans doute, avez-vous vos raisons..."⁴⁴ Perhaps Satie's friendship with Mesens and the admiration that the young Flemish composers expressed for Satie are at the heart of his implied disagreement with Collaer's position. On the other hand, Collaer's friend Darius Milhaud, took a different stand. He advised Collaer on November 20, that he "évite les polémiques locales" for the time being, because the composers' works did not yet merit the attention. Milhaud suggested that they might improve with time. He concluded: "Dis-leur amicalement de travailler. Ne joue pas leurs fourbis parce que pas présentables. Mais n'écris rien. Fais crédit et attendons une œuvre!!!!"⁴⁵ Georges Auric also entered into the discussion. While his letter to Collaer, dated 21 December 1922, did not refer directly to the *Het Overzicht* article, Auric approached the connotations of the labels "modern" and "avant-garde," which were key to Collaer's argument for more complete education of the new generation of composers. Auric complained:

Je suis tout à fait dégoûté par ce qui se passe à Paris et, d'ailleurs, un peu partout, au point de vue "musique" et même, tout simplement "art". C'est la grande confusion, le vafouillage absolu, intégral, et j'ai un peu le regret d'y avoir contribué légèrement. Tout le monde est "moderne," "avant-garde," etc. et rien ne me répugne plus que ces mots qui sont devenus les étiquettes du faux, du fabriqué et du compromis.⁴⁶

Auric's letter showed most clearly the international impact of Collaer's point of view. Although the composers themselves never achieved success outside of a small circle in Belgium, the

⁴³After the publication of "De Vlaamse Toonkunst," Collaer received letters about it from his friends in France, which leads me to believe that the article or excerpts from it appeared in translation in a French journal around 20 November 1922. I have yet to locate this translation.

⁴⁴Erik Satie to Paul Collaer, 26 November 1922, in Collaer, *Correspondance*, 114.

⁴⁵Darius Milhaud to Paul Collaer, 20 November 1922, *Ibid.*, 111–12.

⁴⁶Georges Auric to Paul Collaer, 21 December 1922, *Ibid.*, 119.

questions about the formation of modern composers and the future of musical modernism after the success of Schoenberg, Stravinsky, les Six, and their contemporaries were important to critics and musicians across Europe. It was not a question of national identity as much as it was a universal question of what it meant to be “avant-garde.”

Although Mesens’s inflammatory letter draft remained among his papers, the young composer did send a more temperate version in January 1923. He wrote:

Jeune, j’ai foi en l’avenir: c’est par des œuvres que nous vous prouverons que vous avez eu tort d’écrire cet article malveillant. Je vous reprocherai ça peut être dans l’une ou l’autre revue, mais en me gardant de faire usage d’épithètes malpropres et en conservant dignement le ton de politesse nécessaire dans toute discussion sérieuse.⁴⁷

Mesens hoped to become a successful composer. His efforts to find support for his music and for that of his contemporaries had a different trajectory from Collaer’s series. He focused on the promotion of Belgian music in particular. By 1921, he had established a circle of friends among the young Flemish composers, many of whom Collaer named in “De Vlaamse Toonkunst.” He organized concerts, wrote music criticism, and worked to publicize his friends’ music in Belgium and abroad. He also befriended Satie and collaborated with members of Les Six on concert tours outside of France. But Mesens’s taste for scandal, his controversial claims about composers, and his mediocre music alienated many Belgians. Shortly after he wrote his second letter to Collaer, Mesens abandoned his aspirations to become a composer and turned to literary criticism and painting instead. In 1925, a new group of Belgian composers took up the fight to defend Belgian music. Students of Paul Gilson formed a group called Synthétistes to organize concerts of their

⁴⁷E.L.T. Mesens to Paul Collaer, 15 January 1923, *Ibid.*, 121.

works and to promote their interests as Belgian musicians in Belgium with more success than Mesens had several years earlier.⁴⁸

Collaer's reservations about young Belgian composers were not based on national or regional identity. In fact, following the controversy of his *Het Overzicht* article, Collaer rarely commented upon music by Belgian composers, or on Belgian nationalism.⁴⁹ Although he never programmed music by Mesens, nor by other composers who associated themselves with Mesens, Collaer did periodically program Belgian compositions for the Concerts Pro Arte.⁵⁰ Collaer's complaint in "De Vlaamse Toonkunst" was based on his aesthetic sensibilities, rather than on his sentiments about nationalism. In fact, his critique of the young Flemish composers was one he leveled against other young musicians in the 1920s. A year and a half after the controversial article, for instance, in a review of the Ballets Russes production of the French composer Georges Migot's *Lazarus* in Brussels, Collaer complained of the "mask of modernism" that young composers used to hide their incompetence, calling them "faux modernes, parasites de l'art contemporain."⁵¹ The stability of Collaer's position about young composers who latched onto the wave of modernism without fully comprehending it is echoed in his thoughts about composers and critics more generally: composers must have both talent and experience; critics

⁴⁸See Robert Wangermée, *La musique belge contemporaine*, 60–81.

⁴⁹The ambivalence about nationalism in Collaer's writing did not preclude nationally-themed programs at the Concerts Pro Arte. On 14 March 1928, for instance, the Concerts Pro Arte presented a program of exclusively German music featuring Berg, Mahler, Hanns Eisler, and Schoenberg. However, Collaer never organized a concert of exclusively Belgian repertoire, as the Concerts Populaires did.

⁵⁰Just as many of the living foreign composers whose work was performed at Collaer's concerts were his friends, most of the Belgian composers on the programs had personal relationships with the director. Joseph Jongen, André Souris, and Fernand Quinet each had at least one of their works performed by Collaer's group. Members of the Synthétistes, also heard their works at the Concerts Pro Arte. Compared to the frequency with which works by Darius Milhaud, Erik Satie, and Igor Stravinsky appeared on Pro Arte Programs, however, Belgian compositions were a rare occurrence, with no more than three Belgian works appearing in any single season.

⁵¹Paul Collaer, "Les Ballets suédois; Malipiero aux Concerts Populaires," *Arts et lettres d'aujourd'hui* 2 (1924): 429.

have the responsibility to help the general audience sort out the truly innovative from “banal” or “derivative” music, and talented and experienced composers from untalented and inexperienced ones.

Paul Collaer, Critic

In 1955, Collaer insisted that he was “ni musicologue ni critique musical. C’est en musicien que j’ai servi la cause de la musique moderne, en musicien qui interprète ou fait interpréter les œuvres modernes, alors qu’elles sont encore souvent manuscrites et que nulle tradition ne s’est établie au sujet de leur interprétation.”⁵² Collaer separated himself from the academy, but by publishing critiques of performances and analyses of works that were to be performed in Brussels, he also placed himself—if still peripheral—within the community of professional music critics of his time.⁵³ In fact, Collaer went so far as to chastise other critics for allowing their preconceptions and their own incomplete understanding of a score dominate their evaluations. Collaer discussed the problems of musical journalism in an article in *Les Beaux-Arts* written in anticipation of a 1923 performance of *Le Sacre du printemps*. Recounting the reception of the work immediately after its 1913 premiere, Collaer praised Georges de Pawlowski’s circumspection about the audience’s “méchanceté stupide” at the premiere, who “depuis des années, ne proteste pas contre les plus plats vaudevilles, contre les restes d’opérettes accommodés à la sauce anglaise qu’on lui offre chaque jour,” but who “affecte une souffrance intolérable lorsqu’un artiste, épris d’étrangeté, essaie de lui faire entrevoir une conception neuve,

⁵²Paul Collaer, *La musique moderne, 1905–1955*, 2nd ed. (Brussels: Elsevier, 1955), 9.

⁵³Collaer’s study of early music and ethnomusicology brought him closer the academy. For more on his interactions with academic circles, including the Society for Ethnomusicology, see Robert Wangermée, Introduction to Collaer, *Correspondance*, 42–44, 52–53.

de l'amuser ou de l'intéresser par les lignes et des mouvements jusqu'alors inconnus."⁵⁴ Collaer observed, however, that as a result of the noisy objections from the audience, de Pavolowski did not form an accurate understanding of the work, which the critic described as "du naturalisme préhistorique [...], l'idée générale de cet ouvrage [est] un peu faible."⁵⁵ Though Collaer disagreed with this assessment, he gave Pawlowski the benefit of the doubt because the critic, he assumed, could barely hear the music at the performance, making his evaluation of the piece incomplete. Collaer had more pointed criticism for critics who wrote about the work in the months after the publication of the piano reduction. He accused d'Indy of being a deaf and blind professor who did not understand works that surpassed his own ideas. Collaer scoffed at d'Indy's conclusion that Stravinsky showed promise, but wrote: "nous attendons avec confiance le jour où M. Stravinsky, ayant secoué le joug et s'étant libéré des dogmes de sa petite confrérie, nous donnera une œuvre d'émotion dans laquelle il osera laisser parler son cœur plus haut que son ingéniosité."⁵⁶ Worst of all, Collaer recounted the story of an established music critic who sent a less prestigious colleague to the premiere because he was not interested in the work. When the premiere of *Le Sacre du printemps* proved to be an important event, the first critic replaced his colleague's article with his own glowing review of the piece.

In his own study of *Le Sacre du printemps*, Collaer clearly separated his description of his anticipation to hear the work, built up after he read reviews of the work's premiere in Paris,

⁵⁴Pawlowski article quoted in Paul Collaer, "1913. La critique accueillait *Le Sacre du Printemps*," *Les Beaux-Arts*, 30 November 1934. For Pawlowski's review, first published in *Comœdia* on 31 May 1913, see François Lesure with Gertraut Haberkamp, Malcolm Turner, and Emilia Zanetti, ed., *Dossier de presse du Sacre du printemps d'Igor Stravinsky* (Geneva: Minkoff, 1980). Collaer mentioned Louis Laloy's analysis of the piece, which appeared in the 16 October 1913 issue of *Comœdia*, as an example of a well-written analysis of the work, but his focus is on the problematic reviews.

⁵⁵Quoted in Paul Collaer, "1913. La critique accueillait *Le Sacre du Printemps*."

⁵⁶Ibid.

from that of his study of the score. He concluded: “Ni le langage, ni la pensée étaient difficiles à pénétrer. Il suffisait d’aborder l’œuvre sans idées préconçues.”⁵⁷ By critiquing earlier approaches to music criticism and offering an article that separated his anticipation of hearing the piece from his analysis of the score of the *Sacre du Printemps*, Collaer tacitly asserted himself as a fair, methodical, and thorough critic.

Furthermore, Collaer positioned himself in relation to Paris and Parisian critics rather than in relation to Brussels. In the early 1920s, his description of the importance of the French capital placed music in Brussels and Belgium in a marginal position: “La France et Paris restent le cœur et le cerveau du monde. Qu’on le veuille ou non, c’est d’ici que partent toutes les directions, c’est ici qu’aboutissent tous les efforts, toutes les tentatives.”⁵⁸ He reported on concerts in Paris, taking advantage of the proximity of Brussels and Paris to attend as many as he could. A night train allowed Collaer to return to Belgium by the next morning.⁵⁹ He also cultivated personal relationships with leaders of the avant-garde in the French capital, including Jean Wiener, whose programming for his own concert series was very similar to that of the Concerts Pro Arte. In his reviews, he positioned himself in opposition to Emile Vuillermoz by depicting the French critic as a staunch, immovable conservative. After the Ballets Russes performed Auric’s *Fâcheux*, Milhaud’s *Le Train bleu*, Satie’s *Parade*, and Poulenc’s *Les Biches*, Collaer wrote of the Parisian critic: “Cet excellent M. Vuillermoz en est réduit à la mélancolie; car je crois bien qu’il est à présent le seul critique dont l’opinion n’ait pas brusquement tourné comme une girouette; il reste stoïquement sur ses positions, et son courage mérite l’admiration,

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Paul Collaer, “Le saison de Paris,” *Arts et lettres d’aujourd’hui* 2, no. 23 (15 June 1924): 551.

⁵⁹Muller, *Paul Collaer et Octave Maus*, 32–33; Wangermée, “Paul Collaer, les Concerts Pro Arte,” 22.

si l'on songe aux mille volte-faces qui s'accomplissent en ce moment."⁶⁰ By describing Vuillermoz in this way, Collaer situated himself as more progressive than a critic who had been celebrated as one of the foremost champions of new music in France.

Collaer and Milhaud's Music

Much of Collaer's music criticism was based on his personal relationships with the composers about whom he wrote. Most important of those was his friendship with Darius Milhaud. In a 1973 tribute to the composer for his eightieth birthday, Collaer celebrated Milhaud's music for its timelessness, using the parameters developed in his music criticism of the 1920s:

Elle n'est pas une manifestation d'actualité, le reflet d'un moment particulier, ni une confession personnelle. Cette musique est indépendante du temps par son contenu, et ne peut donc être tributaire d'une mode, d'un engouement passager. Elle est faite pour durer, pour exprimer un ensemble culturel dont les caractères sont permanents. Rien n'y est épisodique, pittoresque ou éphémère. Elle ne représente pas un individu, mais se fait le porte-parole de la collectivité des Hommes.⁶¹

Collaer continued by opposing Milhaud to Schoenberg and Berg: "L'expressionnisme de Milhaud, au contraire de ce qu'il est pour Schoenberg et Berg, ne concerne pas l'individu, mais bien l'universalité de la vie."⁶²

According to Milhaud, he and Collaer met for the first time in the months immediately after the war, at the 1921 concert dedicated to Les Six organized by Lallah Vandervelde and Charles Van den Borren at the IHE. The composer described the meeting: "Pendant le concert, je remarquai un jeune homme qui suivait les partitions de toute la musique que nous exécutons. Il

⁶⁰Paul Collaer, "Epilogues," *Arts et lettres d'aujourd'hui* 2, no. 25 (13 July 1924): 592.

⁶¹Paul Collaer, "Darius Milhaud," 4.

⁶²Ibid., 9.

se présenta à nous; il jouait du piano et était absolument au courant de toute notre activité.”⁶³

Collaer and Milhaud became fast friends, exchanging extended correspondence about new music, and visiting each other in Paris, Mechelen, and Brussels.⁶⁴ Milhaud’s music appeared more often than any other composer’s on the Concerts Pro Arte programs—Milhaud participated in concerts, or his music appeared on twenty of the forty-nine Concerts Pro Arte between 1922 and 1932 (see Table 2.1). It was this personal relationship that was the basis for these programming decisions and Collaer’s critical discussion of the composer’s music in art journals of the time.

During the interwar period, Collaer discussed Milhaud’s music at length in various journal articles, in addition to a book-length biography of the composer. In 1928, Collaer described the relationship between the composer’s music and his character:

La musique de Milhaud est une confidence. Et c’est à cause de cela que, même lorsqu’elle est très simple, elle est d’un accès malaisé. Elle est comme un rayonnement de l’âme du compositeur. Elle exige de l’auditeur un complet abandon, un oubli de soi-même. Se présenter à cette musique avec toute son intelligence, avec toutes ses facultés analytiques, ne sert pas à grand’chose. Ce sont votre âme, votre cœur qu’exige Milhaud. Sa musique émeut les croyants, les mystiques, les passionnés, ceux qui ont souffert. Elle séduit moins les formalistes, les intelligents (j’entends: ceux dont l’intelligence domine la sensibilité, s’exerce avant de la laisser vibrer).⁶⁵

Such an emphasis on originality, on belief, mysticism, and passion reigned in Collaer’s analyses of Milhaud’s compositions. In 1923, when their friendship was becoming more intimate and their correspondence frequent, Collaer wrote articles about two of Milhaud’s works that were representative of his approach to discussing the composer’s works.

⁶³Darius Milhaud, *Notes sans musique* (Paris: René Julliard, 1949), 104.

⁶⁴See Collaer, *Correspondence*.

⁶⁵Paul Collaer, “*Antigone* d’Honegger et le *Pauvre Matelot* de Darius Milhaud (27 December 1927),” *Les Cahiers de Belgique* 1 (February 1928): 32.

Table 2.1– Milhaud at the Concerts Pro Arte, 1923–32⁶⁶

28 February 1923	Milhaud conducted Arnold Schoenberg's <i>Pierrot Lunaire</i>
13 March 1923	Milhaud- String Quartet no. 6, op. 77 (premiere) Milhaud- <i>Printemps</i> , op. 25 Milhaud- Retour de l'Enfant Prodigue (conducted by Milhaud)
26 February 1924	Milhaud- Sonata, op. 47, for flute oboe, clarinet and piano Milhaud- Sonata for flute et piano
9 May 1924	Milhaud- Cinq études, op. 63 for piano and orchestra
16 February 1925	Milhaud- Sonata, op. 15, for two violins
16 March 1925	Milhaud- <i>Catalogue des fleurs</i> , op. 60 Milhaud- Six chants populaires hébraïques, op. 86 (premiere) Milhaud conducted Arnold Schoenberg's <i>Pierrot Lunaire</i>
20 April 1925	Milhaud- <i>Création du Monde</i>
10 November 1925	Milhaud- String Quartet no. 7, op. 87 (premiere)
8 February 1926	Milhaud- <i>Création du Monde</i>
15 March 1926	Milhaud- <i>Saudades do Brasil</i> , op. 67b
24 March 1927	Milhaud- Suite en ré (de la <i>Création du Monde</i>) for piano and string quartet
4th concert of 1926-27 season (no date given)	Milhaud- <i>Machines agricoles</i> , op. 56
15 February 1928	Milhaud- Trois caprices de Paganini, op. 97 Milhaud- <i>Prières journalières à l'usage de Juifs du Comtat-Venaissin</i> , op. 96 Milhaud- Quatre poèmes de Catulle, op. 80, for voice and violin Milhaud- Sonata no. 2, op. 40 for violin and piano
21 December 1928	Milhaud- Sonata for clarinet and piano (possibly an arrangement of one of the violin sonatas)
1 February 1929	Milhaud- <i>L'Homme et son Désir</i> , op. 48
29 November 1929	Milhaud- Symphonie de chambre no. 3 (Sérénade), op. 71 Milhaud- Symphonie de chambre no. 5, op. 75
11 February 1930	Milhaud- <i>Création du Monde</i>
12 November 1930	Milhaud- Concerto pour batterie et petit orchestre (premiere) Milhaud- <i>Carnaval d'Aix</i> , op. 83b, for piano and orchestra (after <i>Salade</i>), conducted by Milhaud
12 January 1932	Milhaud- String Quartet no. 2, op. 16
1 March 1932 (Bozar) 10th anniversary celebration	Milhaud-Sonata, op. 47, for flute, oboe, clarinet and piano Milhaud- Symphonie de chambre no. 5, op. 75

⁶⁶The tenth anniversary program for the Concerts Pro Arte included a list of concerts with dates and programs for each, along with an essay by Ernest Closson on the organization's history. There were no works by Milhaud on the program for the first full season of the Concerts Pro Arte. A copy of this program is housed at the KBR, DS 2.189/124 Mus.

In 1923, Collaer celebrated Milhaud's *Création du monde*, which was performed more frequently at the Concerts Pro Arte than any of the composer's other works. He wrote of the transformation of jazz into something "more serious":

Pourtant l'esprit du jazz est présent partout, situant nettement la musique dans notre conscience. Les thèmes de blues et de rag-times prennent un caractère de gravité, de grandeur. Ainsi Bach transfigurait les thèmes de menuets. Anoblissement d'une forme vulgaire qui ne pouvait être accompli que par un créateur doué d'une grande puissance d'assimilation.⁶⁷

Collaer thus situated Milhaud as a composer who is at once historically important, and in a way timeless, leaning heavily on a conception of primitivism as simultaneously reaching into the most distant past, as ageless, and as raised to a noble status through the composer's talent for manipulating raw material.

Furthermore, Collaer positions Milhaud's ballet in relation to Stravinsky's *Sacre du printemps*, which the Concerts Populaires had performed only six months earlier. He connected the work to the trend toward a taste for primitivism in music that included the contentious performance of Prokofiev's *Suite Scythe* and the Stravinsky ballet in the same season (see chapter 1):

Au moyen des éléments mélodiques et rythmiques inspirés par le folklore nègre, Milhaud a exprimé toute la gamme des sentiments allant de la paix pastorale à la passion haletante. Il n'a point cherché à exprimer la peur de l'homme devant la nature solitaire et plaine de mystères redoutables: il n'a pas voulu refaire une nouveau *Sacre du Printemps*; les Périmés le lui reprocheront certainement, eux qui n'ont pas l'imagination suffisante pour se porter chaque jour dans un monde de pensées et de sensations nouvelles. Les Nègres n'ont pas la crainte du monde désolé, car le monde se réduit pour eux à la forêt luxuriante, humide et chaude; leur philosophie est candide et ne connaît pas le sentiment d'horreur.⁶⁸

⁶⁷Paul Collaer, "Œuvres nouvelles aux Ballets Suédois," *Arts et lettres d'aujourd'hui* 1, no. 35 (4 November 1923): 751. Erin Maher explores the implications of jazz as a marker for race and Africa in "Le Jazz des Noirs: Milhaud, Concepts of Race in Music, and *La Création du monde*," unpublished manuscript, 9 December 2009.

⁶⁸Collaer, "Œuvres nouvelles aux Ballets Suédois," 753–54.

The theme of connecting Milhaud's personality to his work continued. Of *La Brébis égarée*, premiered in Paris on 10 December 1923 at the Salle Favart he wrote:

Qu'un tel sujet ait tenté Darius Milhaud ne doit étonner personne. Car précisément, un des caractères dominants de la puissante personnalité de Milhaud réside dans la constante intériorité du sentiment, dans la concentration de l'émotion; ce caractère se montre dès les œuvres de début du compositeur. Tout est porté en profondeur, aucun sentiment n'est superficiel. Cette qualité rend la compréhension de la musique de Milhaud assez difficile pour la généralité des auditeurs, impossible pour ceux qui "tournent autour" d'une œuvre, sans avoir la force d'"entrer dedans."⁶⁹

Such a claim has several implications: first, it might be read as a call to audiences to understand more deeply the music that they were hearing, and to make an effort to "enter into" a work, rather than accepting the position of an outside observer. It is a criticism of those who do not attempt to understand unfamiliar work on a deeper level. Second, Collaer's style places him in a privileged position. Though he does not write about his relationship with the composer explicitly, as the author, he does assume authority by making the connection between the composer's personality and his music. Indeed, through his music criticism, Collaer carved a space in musical discourse in Brussels that only he and his Concerts Pro Arte could fill. His call for reflective listening and his emphasis on the importance of understanding composers' styles on an intimate level targeted the circles of intellectual and social elites in the city, rather than the general public.

Collaer's Concerts Pro Arte and Proselytization for New Music

J.D., reviewing the first Concert Pro Arte of 1922 for *Le Soir*, cast the musicians in terms that he continued to use throughout the 1920s: "Ce sont vraiment des missionnaires qui viennent nous prêcher un Evangile nouveau. Il faut leur en savoir gré car, sans eux, comment serions-nous au

⁶⁹Paul Collaer, "La Brébis égarée de Darius Milhaud," *Arts et Lettres d'Aujourd'hui* 1, no. 34 (23 December 1923): 949.

courant?” The audience, by contrast, he presented as neophytes who were still learning to appreciate what the musicians offered: “Le public [...] se montre, comme il convient, reconnaissant aux artistes et indulgent pour les auteurs. L’admiration viendra plus tard, avec l’habitude. Il s’en excuse en applaudissant comme s’il avait compris.”⁷⁰ By all accounts, the Concerts Pro Arte only attracted a small audience of enthusiasts for modern music. J.D.’s tone, with its hint of irony, therefore, separated the author from the musicians and the audiences at the concerts. Despite Collaer’s detailed writing about the importance of developing good listening habits in the interests of fostering audiences with good taste, there is no indication that Collaer or his collaborators made any efforts to expand their audiences. Even critics who reviewed the concerts continued to be mystified by the new music that appeared on the programs. As a result, J.D., among others, consistently focused on the efforts of the musicians to make such music accessible, even if they did not appreciate the music itself. Such language set the Concerts Pro Arte apart as an elite space for select musicians and audiences.

May de Rudder, writing for *L’Eventail* in November 1922, declared the Concerts Pro Arte series to be the continuation of Octave Maus’s group: “Reprenant la tradition des Concerts de la Libre Esthétique, où sous la généreuse impulsion d’Octave Maus toute la *jeune musique* d’alors trouvait à s’exprimer, le groupe *Pro Arte* nous donne cette année une petite ‘exposition’ des tendances nouvelles de la musique de chambre.”⁷¹ Though de Rudder’s description may have implicitly connected Collaer’s new endeavor to other concert series in the city that also staked a claim, directly or indirectly, to the nineteenth-century tradition of Les XX and La Libre Esthétique, Collaer’s fiercely independent approach to new music distinguished his concerts

⁷⁰J.D., “Le Concert Pro Arte,” *Le Soir*, 15 November 1922.

⁷¹May de Rudder, “Musique,” *L’Eventail*, 19 November 1922.

from those of his contemporaries. Ultimately, it was his independent stance and the isolation that he experienced, both by design and through circumstances beyond his control, which helped to separate the Concerts Pro from other series.

In the early 1920s, Collaer participated in many other concert series in Brussels, earning a reputation for his musical taste and his interpretations as a pianist. By April 1922, however, he began to pull away from these associations in order to focus on the Concerts Pro Arte. Though he continued to perform occasionally as a pianist and accompanist outside of his own concert series, Collaer chose to give up some of his activities in Brussels. Perhaps most significantly, he made the decision to stop attending Henry Le Bœuf's private readings of new music. In a letter explaining his decision, he wrote:

Toutes mes forces sont consacrées à mettre en lumière les œuvres que j'aime et que je juge importantes. Cela me prend beaucoup de temps et un effort considérable. Je ne puis donc songer à distraire de ce temps et de ce travail la moindre parcelle en faveur d'œuvres qui ne m'intéressent pas, surtout que ma santé précaire m'oblige à des ménagements sérieux. Or, la lecture des partitions manuscrites demande une grosse préparation. Je le ferais volontiers s'il s'agissait d'œuvres remarquables. Malheureusement, et vous serez d'accord avec moi sur ce point, à part le 'de Falla' et Roger-Ducasse, tout ce que j'ai lu cet hiver aux Populaires est d'une non-valeur indigne à mon point de vue, je perds donc un temps qui m'est précieux. Cependant, j'aurais continué, si j'avais eu la joie de voir bien accueillir les œuvres réellement fortes de notre époque. Ce que j'ai entendu dire sur le Sacre du Printemps m'a été un coup trop rude. J'entendrais des réflexions semblables sur la Fête de Printemps de Roussel ou les grandes symphonies d'Honegger et de Milhaud. Toutes ces œuvres, les plus grandes de ce temps, me sont tellement chères que les réflexions par trop simplistes qu'on fait sur leur compte me sont intolérables. Je préfère donc m'abstenir.⁷²

In this letter, Collaer's perception of his own superior taste, and the inferiority of other opinions expressed at Le Bœuf's gatherings indicate the critical stance with which Collaer distanced himself from his contemporaries in Brussels. Despite this distance, Collaer continued to cultivate a relationship with Le Bœuf and the Concerts Populaires. He made sure to do so on his terms,

⁷²Paul Collaer to Henry Le Bœuf, 4 April 1922. Quoted in Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts: la création d'un haut lieu de culture à Bruxelles (1928–1945)* (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2000), 66.

rather than on Le Bœuf's. Collaer acted as an advisor and intermediary, encouraging the director of the Concerts Populaires to consider programming the works of composers whose chamber pieces appeared on the Concerts Pro Arte programs. In this capacity, Collaer was working as an outsider again, and always with an eye toward his goals for the Concerts Pro Arte.

Robert Wangermée has described Collaer's series:

Les "Concerts Pro Arte" n'ont jamais prétendu être noués à une avant-garde révolutionnaire ; leur objectif a été de donner à la musique contemporaine une place qui lui était par ailleurs refusée dans la vie artistique, pour la réconcilier avec le public; ils ont voulu montrer la continuité des langages, même dans les productions les plus audacieuses.⁷³

Shaped by Collaer's philosophies about the difference between the values of "modern" and "contemporary" music, the programs for the Concerts Pro Arte generally aligned closely with the director's tastes, his ideas about new music composition, and his orientation toward the new-music scene in Paris. In 1978, Collaer described the program for the first Concert Pro Arte on 14 December 1921 as one "qui servait de liaison entre la musique d'avant 1914 et celle qui naissait vers 1918."⁷⁴ The program included Albert Roussel's Piano Trio, op. 2 (1902); Gian Francesco Malipiero's *Rispetti e Strombotti* (1920) for string quartet; and Gabriel Fauré's Piano Quintet no. 2 (1921).

Collaer's new series operated on a limited budget and without government subsidies. The series' patrons included many of the members of the intellectual and political elite in the city who also supported the Concerts Populaires (and later the Société Philharmonique), and the queen's public musical endeavors. Baron Buffin, Mlle Delgouffre, Mme Despret, M. and Mme

⁷³Robert Wangermée, "La vie musicale à Bruxelles. D'une guerre à l'autre," in *Au bonheur des musiciens: 150 ans de vie musicale à Bruxelles*, ed. Daniel Commins, Michel Debrocq, Célestin Deliège, et al. (Brussels: Société Philharmonique de Bruxelles, 1997), 59.

⁷⁴Paul Collaer, "Albert Roussel à Bruxelles," *Cahiers Albert Roussel* 1 (1978): 4.

Jules Destrée, Mme Octave Maus, Constatin Piron, Harry Schleisinger, and Adolphe and Susanne Stoclet were members of the *comité de patronage* from its first season 1922, and throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s.⁷⁵ The financial limitations of the Concerts Pro Arte led Collaer to find creative ways to bring some of the best-known performers of the time to perform for minimal pay or free of charge. Collaer tended to take advantage of visits of renowned artists to Brussels for performances at other concert organizations or at the TRM. Some artists even made it a habit to perform at the Concerts Pro Arte for only a nominal fee, for no money at all, or even at a personal financial loss.⁷⁶

Given the isolation that Collaer created for himself and the exclusivity of the core group of supporters, both financial and musical, J.D.'s rhetoric using religious vocabulary about the concert series was appropriate, especially for the wide readership of a daily newspaper. He prefaced his review of the 17 February 1925 concert: "Ces jeunes artistes, en leur apostolat, ont fait vœu de nous conduire en des régions inexplorées et ils tiennent parole."⁷⁷ J.D. pointed out at the beginning of the following season that the work of the apostles of new music was thankless:

L'apostolat du quatuor "Pro Arte" est une entreprise ingrate. La masse du public garde des préférences inavouées, et spontanément applaudit la musique souriante d'un Verdi et même le 'Septième Quatuor' en mi bémol de Darius Milhaud. Il a beaucoup plu, ce quatuor, dédié au quatuor 'Pro Arte', quatre petits tableaux, plutôt brefs, pleins de verve et presque amusants.⁷⁸

⁷⁵"Musique," *L'Eventail*, 29 October 1922.

⁷⁶ Francis Poulenc, for instance, wrote to Collaer on 7 March 1925 that he planned to use the money Collaer was to give him for an upcoming concert to pay for singer Suzanne Peignot's travel expenses to Brussels so that she could sing his *Cinq poèmes de Ronsard* at the 16 March 1925 Concert Pro Arte. Poulenc made this offer after Mayra Freund refused to perform his composition. His decision to pay for another singer, therefore, can be read as both proof of Poulenc's regard for Collaer's concerts as a venue for the performance of his music and as evidence of his own self-interest, as his work would not have been included in the program had he not found a replacement for Freund. In Collaer, *Correspondence*, 204.

⁷⁷J.D., "Le Concert Pro Arte," *Le Soir*, 18 February 1925.

⁷⁸J.D., "Le Concert Pro Arte," *Le Soir*, 12 November 1925.

Such language also constructed a clear division between the intellectual elite and the social and political elite in the city. Though the two spheres often overlapped, the intellectual elite was marked by a commitment to the kind of thoughtful listening that Collaer championed. The people associated with the Concerts Pro Arte tended to belong to the intellectual elite, but not necessarily the political elite, perhaps because of the isolation that Collaer constructed around the series. The social and political elite's gatherings, on the other hand, reached beyond the realm of abstract aesthetic philosophy (see my discussion of Queen Elisabeth's gatherings in chapter 4).

By 1926, J.D.'s tone about the Concerts Pro Arte became less ambivalent. He found that the programs were no longer sensational and that the musicians had become dogmatic in their defense of music that no longer represented the avant-garde, J.D. changed his tone. For the 12 December 1926 concert, for instance, J.D. declared that the program of Stravinsky, Honegger, and Prokofiev offered "rien de sensationnel."⁷⁹ By 1928, he was panning Collaer's style of performance: "le pianiste Paul Collaer, alliant comme d'ordinaire la gravité à la fougue, boxant son clavier avec des élans de missionnaire, au demeurant le meilleur fin du monde. Ah! s'il pouvait retrouver son sourire!"⁸⁰ In fact, the image of a belligerent and stubborn Collaer, insisting on the performance of music without consideration of audience tastes, became common in the late 1920s, especially in J.D.'s writing. When the Concerts Pro Arte gave their first concert at the Salle de Musique de Chambre in the new Palais des Beaux-Arts in 1928, J.D. cast Collaer again as a pedant: "le plus fervent de tous, le pianiste Paul Collaer, que l'on vient acclamer, à bon droit, dans ces soirées parfois laborieuses."⁸¹

⁷⁹J.D., "Le Concert Pro Arte," *Le Soir*, 15 December 1926.

⁸⁰J.-B. D., "Le Concert Pro Arte," *Le Soir*, 17 February 1928.

⁸¹J.-B. D., "Le Concert Pro Arte," *Le Soir*, 21 November 1928.

Such an accusation was not unwarranted. By 1928, a group of composers had been established as the mainstays of programming at the Concerts Pro Arte. Audiences could count on music by Collaer's close friends and acquaintances each season. Milhaud's works received pride of place, indicating Collaer's admiration for his friend's music, and the easy access that he had to the composer's newest compositions as a result of their friendship. Stravinsky, Satie, Roussel, and Sauguet were also featured regularly. Beginning in 1925, Paul Hindemith's music was performed at least once each season. The performances of many other up-and-coming composers' works could be attributed as much to Collaer's opportunism as to his aesthetic sensibilities. Some composers, such as Prokofiev, came to the Concerts Pro Arte when they were visiting Brussels for other purposes.

Given Collaer's insistence on the importance of music being "vivante," and of fair and careful study of new music, the portrait that J.D. painted in 1928 was a blow—whether intentional or not—against his philosophies and the persona of the champion of new music that Collaer had so carefully cultivated for himself through his music criticism. Accusations from his contemporaries that he was behaving like an "old man" four years later suggest that despite Collaer's best efforts, the label of pedant of new music stuck. Collaer's collaborators in the Pro Arte performances fared better in the press. The impressive stable of internationally renowned performers for the concert series was a significant selling-point throughout the series' history.

The Pro Arte Quartet

In a savvy move, Collaer borrowed the name for his concert series from a Belgian string quartet that was beginning to come into its own by specializing in new music. The Pro Arte Quartet was created as part of the Musique des Guides of the Belgian army during World War I, and had

already enjoyed acclaim both on the front in Belgium and in Great Britain by the end of 1918. In Brussels, Collaer had collaborated with the quartet with some regularity in the years leading up to the December 1921 Concert Pro Arte.⁸² In March 1922, J.D. celebrated the quartet:

Les excellents artistes ne se plaindront pas du succès qu'on leur a fait. Il y eut des cris, des coups de sifflet, des interruptions, des ovations, des rappels, un vrai meeting contradictoire. Au moins, voilà de la musique vivante, juvénile, et qui n'endort pas l'auditoire. Cet art flambant neuf est comme l'absinthe: on fait la grimace d'abord; finalement on y prend goût.⁸³

There is less ambiguity in J.D.'s praise for the quartet than in his descriptions of Collaer and the project of the Concerts Pro Arte more generally, even in this early review. Although Collaer's series borrowed the Quatour Pro Arte's name, the quartet was not tied exclusively to the series. They performed elsewhere in Brussels, including at the Salle Giroux in 1921, the Salle Delgay (1922–24), the Union Coloniale, the Cercle Artistique et Littéraire, and the Galerie le Centaure.⁸⁴

As early as in spring 1923, the group was also enjoying international recognition for its interpretations of new music. That May, they performed Gian Francesco Malipiero's *Rispetti et Strombotti* and Léo Weiner's String Quartet no. 2, which had won the Berkshire Prize of 1922, at the American Academy in Rome. This performance marked their first contact with the American patron Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, who was instrumental in helping to expand their international profile. Her patronage of music in the United States had become well known by the 1920s. She aimed not only to support music and musicians, but also to encourage others to

⁸²In fact, for the program celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Concerts Pro Arte, these early concerts appear in the listing of all the programs that the series offered under the title "concerts hors série."

⁸³J.D., "Au Conservatoire," *Le Soir*, 2 March 1922.

⁸⁴Daniel Berger et al. *L'heure bleue: la vie nocturne à Bruxelles de 1830 à 1940* (Brussels: Crédit communal, 1987), 40. Two substantial studies of the Quartet Pro Arte examine the group's history, from its origins in the Belgian army during World War I, through its years of international touring in the 1920s and 1930s, to the residence that Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge arranged for them at the University of Wisconsin at Madison during World War II. In 2014, the quartet, still based in Wisconsin, celebrated the hundredth anniversary of its founding, including a tour of Belgium. See Martha Blum and Nancy Becknell, *The Pro Arte Quartet: 50 Years* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin-Madison, School of Music, 1991); and Anne Van Malderen, "Formations Pro Arte (1912–1947)."

follow her example.⁸⁵ The quartet performed at the first ISCM festival in Salzburg later that summer, where Coolidge heard them for a second time. It was after this performance that the quartet was invited to perform at the inauguration of the Coolidge Auditorium at the Library of Congress in October of 1925. Three years later, Ernest Bloch wrote to the quartet's manager, Gaston Verhuyck: "The fact that they are sponsored by Mrs. F. S. Coolidge is certainly the greatest asset they could have in this country, where Mrs. Coolidge has been a providence for art and young artists. No introduction could be better."⁸⁶

Though Robert Wangermée claims that the quartet's success abroad helped to confirm Brussels's reputation as a center for new music, the ensemble's reputation quickly eclipsed any discussion of the Belgian capital in international reviews.⁸⁷ At the end of their 1926 American tour, for instance, *The New York Times* reported that the group performed the quartets by Vittorio Rieti, Milhaud, and Jongen that bore dedications to the quartet, but the paper offered no commentary about the links that these works had to the Concerts Pro Arte or to the musical life in Brussels.⁸⁸ If at all, Brussels figured into such reviews only as the home base for the quartet. At home, however, the quartet was hailed as a representative of Belgian musical culture abroad.

⁸⁵Following her father's death in 1915, for instance, Coolidge donated half of the trust that she inherited to a special fund to support pension payments and sick members of the Chicago Orchestra. Other wealthy Americans, including Bryon Lathrop, followed suit. Barr, *Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge: American Patron of Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1998), 111.

⁸⁶Ernest Bloch to Gaston Verhuyck, 3 May 1926. Fonds Gaston Verhuyck, KBR, Mus. Ms. 476/II/1–28.

⁸⁷Robert Wangermée, "La vie musicale à Bruxelles autour du Théâtre de la Monnaie," in *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Marcel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 20.

⁸⁸"Pro-Arte Quartet's Adieu: Brussels Organization Closes a Successful Tour of This Country," *The New York Times*, 31 December 1926. The quartet received many dedications from composers of the period: Louis Gruenberg, *Four Indiscretions*, op. 20 (1922); Casella, Concerto, op. 40 for string quartet (1924); Bernard Reichel, Petit Quatuor à cordes (Sonatine) (1924); Milhaud, String Quartet no. 7, op. 87 (1925); Alexandre Tansman, String Quartet no. 3 (1925); Rieti, Quartet no. 1 (1926); Huybrechts, Quartet no. 2 (1927); Bartók, Quartet No. 4, Sz 91 (1928); Jerzy Fitelberg, Quartet no. 2 (1928); Houdret, Quartet (1928); Jean Cartan, Quartet no. 2 (1930); Frederick Jacobi, Quartet no. 2 (1933); Henry Cowell, Quartet no. 2 (Mosaic Quartet) (1935); Honegger, Quartet no. 2 (1934–35); and Milhaud, *Cantate de l'Enfant et de la Mère* (1938) (dedicated to the Quartet Pro Arte and Collaer). See

Due to the Quartet Pro Arte's increasingly hectic international touring schedule, they were no longer available for Collaer's series. J.D. lamented the quartet's absence in his reviews for *Le Soir*. By 1928, Collaer turned to other string quartets or to music written for other chamber ensembles to fill the void left by the travelling quartet. That March, Rudolph Kolisch's Wiener Streichquartett performed Berg's *Lyric Suite* and Schoenberg's third String Quartet, op. 30. In fact, during the 1927–28 season, the Pro Arte Quartet only appeared on three of the five concerts.

Collaer's regular collaborations with musicians in Brussels also included his work with sopranos Evelyne Brélia and Vera Janacopoulos, conductor Arthur Prévost, and cellist and composer Fernand Quinet, who won the first of Le Bœuf's Prix de la Fondation Rubens in 1930. Brélia's reputation as a singer was in place before the first Concert Pro Arte. At Collaer's concerts, Brélia sang works by French composers, particularly Auric, Milhaud, and Sauguet. Admired by critics including François Rasse, Brélia's reputation rested on her sensitive interpretations of new music, rather than on the quality of her voice. In 1920, for instance, Rasse wrote:

[J]e ne crois pas à l'art auquel elle se donne avec fougue... Mais j'admire la musicienne aguerrie, l'interprète vivante, l'artiste si sympathique qui, douée d'une mémoire surprenante et sûre, sait non seulement mettre au point un programme d'une difficulté inouïe, mais le réaliser avec aisance.⁸⁹

Rasse's sentiment anticipated later criticism of the Concerts Pro Arte tended at once to complain about the music and to praise the artists for their efforts to bring such music to audiences in

Anne Van Malderen, "Formations Pro Arte (1912–1947)," 379. The Quartet Pro Arte enjoyed Henry Le Bœuf's support throughout the interwar years, and Le Bœuf was instrumental in the organization of the 1926 tour.

⁸⁹François Rasse, "Chronique Musicale. Feuilles d'Album," *Le Soir*, 29 December 1920.

Brussels.⁹⁰ Vera Janacopulos's background represented the kind of multinational flavor that appealed to Belgium at the time. She was born in Brazil to Greek parents and moved to France at the age of four. In New York, around 1918, Janacopulos met Prokofiev through her husband, Alexy Fyodorovich Stahl. Stahl hosted Prokofiev at their country home often while they were in New York, and the composer admired Janacopulos's interpretations of his songs. In the United States, Janacopulos sang in New York and Boston, giving recitals as well as singing in symphonic concerts with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.⁹¹ Perhaps in part because of her technical abilities, the soprano's repertoire was broader than Brélia's. Among her performances were works by French, Russian, and Spanish composers. May de Rudder declared of Janacopulos's style that "Son art reflète fidèlement son internationalisme. Franchise d'action, chaleur d'expression, pure tradition hellénique, audacieux raffinement des Asiatiques, enfin, les qualités françaises par excellence, le goût et la proportion, tout concourt à faire de son art vocal une jouissance rare, d'une qualité étrangement prenante."⁹² Such reviews, emphasizing the quality of the performers, reveal the value that was placed on the musicians on stage, even if Brussels's critics were not as enthusiastic about the music they were performing.

The Concerts Pro Arte and the Société Philharmonique

Although Collaer maintained a distance from Henry Le Bœuf's work at the Concerts Populaires, and later at the Société Philharmonique (see Chapter 5), the Concerts Pro Arte were among the

⁹⁰Brélia died under mysterious circumstances near Charleroi in July 1928. *Le Soir* followed the inquest in detail during the summer and autumn of that year.

⁹¹Sergey Prokofiev, *Diaries 1915–1923: Behind the Mask*, trans. and ed. Anthony Phillips (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 330n1, 371–72, 403, 436–37. See also Arthur Rubinstein, *My Many Years* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1980). The Stahls returned to Europe in March 1920.

⁹²May de Rudder, "Musique," *L'Eventail*, 1 January 1922.

first the organizations that Le Bœuf brought under the purview of the Société Philharmonique in his bid to centralize the musical life in Brussels. In the new partnership, Collaer's concerts represented both a partner and a competitor to Le Bœuf's Société Philharmonique and his vision of Brussels's musical life. Under the Société Philharmonique, Collaer continued to shape the concert series, though now in collaboration (but not always in harmony) with the directors of the Société Philharmonique.

Surviving correspondence indicates that Collaer and Le Bœuf were beginning to consider a collaboration between the Concerts Pro Arte and the Concerts Populaires as early as 1926. A letter from Le Bœuf's secretary, Marcel Cuvelier, to Collaer dated 28 June 1926 suggests that Collaer proposed the alliance: "J'ai parlé à M. Le Bœuf d'une collaboration éventuelle des Pro Arte avec les Concerts Populaires, principalement en ce qui concerne la circulaire à envoyer d'ici quelque temps. M. Le Bœuf n'est pas opposé à cela, en principe, mais il me charge de vous demander les précisions à ce sujet."⁹³ This project, however, was not accomplished until after the creation of the Société Philharmonique and construction of the PBA. The process of folding the Concerts Pro Arte into the Société Philharmonique began sometime in early 1930. In the fall of that year, Collaer wrote to Le Bœuf, expressing his anticipation of the new partnership:

Dois-je vous dire que la perspective de rattachement des Pro Arte à la Philharmonique me comble de joie? Non seulement que cette solution nous facilite l'existence. Mais surtout parce que la vie musicale de Bruxelles sera d'autant plus belle et digne parce que nos efforts seront plus coordonnés.

Pro Arte, gardant et conservant son caractère de laboratoire de musique rentre aux associations symphoniques le service de débloquer la production contemporaine. Il leur permettra de distinguer, à l'audition, les personnalités qui méritent une place aux grands concerts.

La question importante est donc de conserver à la section Pro Arte son indépendance et programme, pour autant qu'elle cadre avec les possibilités matérielles. Cette section doit, par définition, jouer le rôle d'antenne détectrice. Ce qui ne l'empêche

⁹³Marcel Cuvelier to Paul Collaer, 28 June 1926. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/VI/29/15.

pas de présenter les chefs d'œuvres classiques, même les plus connus, dans l'intimité de la salle de musique de chambre.⁹⁴

Beginning that season (1930–31), the Concerts Pro Arte's business matters and finances were managed by the Société Philharmonique. Collaer's vision of the symbiotic relationship was clear: the Société Philharmonique would provide material stability and the Concerts Pro Arte would provide a space to "experiment" with new music.

The optimism about the mutually beneficial arrangement between the Concerts Pro Arte and the Société Philharmonique, however, was short-lived. By the fall of 1931, the board of directors of the Société Philharmonique became concerned about the finances of Collaer's series. Cuvelier wrote to Collaer in late October to warn him of the situation: "Le premier concert d'abonnement des Pro Arte est fixé au début du mois de novembre. Nous avons actuellement très très peu d'abonnements. Si le déficit est gros au bout de l'année il y a des chances pour que le Conseil d'administration renonce d'organiser l'année suivant les concerts Pro Arte." He went on to plead with Collaer to contact former subscribers and friends, because they had to increase the number of subscriptions five-fold in order to ensure the future of the series.⁹⁵ When Collaer did not respond to Cuvelier's request for a meeting to discuss the situation, Cuvelier wrote again to inform him that the receipts for the Pro Arte had decreased by half compared to the previous year.⁹⁶ Collaer finally responded ten days later with a long, passive-aggressive letter, not offering solutions to the problem, but rather explaining why the problem arose, blaming the economic crisis of the Great Depression, and casting the Concerts Pro Arte as a victim of audience apathy:

⁹⁴Paul Collaer to Henry Le Bœuf, 25 September 1930. Archives de la Société Philharmonique (ASPh), Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Box 4.

⁹⁵Marcel Cuvelier to Paul Collaer, 28 October 1931. ASPh, Box 5.

⁹⁶Marcel Cuvelier to Paul Collaer, 20 November 1931. ASPh, Box 5.

[La cause primordiale] est surtout psychologique. Les gens sont obsédés par des soucis et des fracas sans nombre, à cause de la crise. Leurs nerfs sont tendus par les affaires, et ils ne désirent pas, le soir, fournir encore un effort intellectuel. [...] Dans ces conditions, les concerts Pro Arte sont les premiers à souffrir d'un tel état de choses. Le fait n'est pas particulier à la musique. Il est absolument général. On constate en ce moment une dégringolade des choses sérieuses et difficiles au profit de l'agrément direct et facile. Cela est indépendant de notre volonté, autant la mienne, musicien, que de la tienne, organisateur.

La question qui se pose est donc celle-ci: faut-il continuer à maintenir les concerts Pro Arte ou vaut-il mieux les suspendre jusqu'à des temps plus favorables?

Argument pour le maintien: les concerts Pro Arte sont un laboratoire à musique, c'est un devoir de les maintenir. Si la navigation est rare, ce n'est pas un motif pour laisser éteindre les phares.

Argument contre: S'il y a si peu de gens qui se dérangent cette année pour suivre l'effort de la pensée moderne, cela vaut-il que moi je me crève la santé pour eux, cela vaut-il que la Philharmonique fasse un gros effort financier?

Personnellement, étant en mauvais état, je suis incapable de répondre à ces arguments. Réfléchis-y et à l'occasion montre cette lettre à Monsieur Le Bœuf, qui sera comme toujours un bon conseil pour nous.⁹⁷

Two months later, the matter still had not been resolved. Cuvelier wrote again to inform Collaer that the first concert alone had used the whole budget for the season, and that the concerts were in danger.⁹⁸ By the following February, Collaer's disgruntlement with the Société Philharmonique's concerns about finances became explicit, and the passive aggression gave way to confrontation. In a letter about plans for the 1932–33 season, Collaer leveled harsh criticism against the society:

Le groupe Pro Arte ne se sent pas à l'aise au sein de la Société Philharmonique. Comment en serait-il autrement? On y entend dire sans répit que le public ne veut plus de la musique moderne. En tant d'y organiser, de plus en plus, pour satisfaire le public sans le faire progresser. Les concerts Pro Arte sont traités en parents pauvres et un peu agaçant. L'effort que nos déployons ne trouve pas sa contrepartie dans l'organisation de la Société Philharmonique. Nous sentons que nous sommes tolérés, mais nous ne sommes pas soutenus dans notre effort.

Il va sans dire que nous ne pouvons pas tolérer un tel état de choses, étant donné la grandeur de notre effort et la valeur de ce que nous offrons.⁹⁹

⁹⁷Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier, 30 November 1931. ASPH, Box 5.

⁹⁸Marcel Cuvelier to Paul Collaer, 21 December 1931. ASPH, Box 5.

⁹⁹Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier, 12 February 1932. ASPH, Box 5.

Collaer continued by listing six conditions that the “groupe Pro Arte” (it is unclear who, apart from Collaer, made up this group) would require in order to continue the concerts in the future. The conditions included, among others, the guarantee of four concerts: two given by the Quatour Pro Arte, and two with an orchestra of twenty-five; publicity, both in the press and by way of mailed reminders, and the presence of a representative of the Société Philharmonique backstage during the concerts. Cuvelier, however, rejected these conditions, writing in red pencil across the top of the letter, “Mauvaise formule.”

Relations between Collaer and the society had deteriorated further by March 1932, when Collaer wrote another letter declaring the end of the partnership between the Société Philharmonique and Concerts Pro Arte, listing grievances against the administration. He saved the most flagrant for last:

4. En l’absence de tout signe de sympathie à l’occasion du 10e anniversaire Pro Arte, de la part des milieux dirigeants de la Philharmonique, j’ai été obligé de prendre moi-même la parole pour remercier l’orchestre Pro Arte et pour lui dire combien son travail a été remarqué et apprécié à l’étranger. Quand je songe qu’Anvers avait délégué de Vocht, que de Thoran était venu, que nous avons reçus des adresses de félicitations de Berlin, de Vienne, de Paris, etc...., il n’est pas exagéré de dire et de penser que nous ne sommes pas ‘chez nous’ à la Philharmonique.

5. Comme suite à notre récent entretien, je suis d’accord pour estimer que les Concerts Pro Arte doivent reprendre leur vie propre. De cette façon, dans ton budget pour la saison prochaine, tu n’auras plus à compter avec le déficit exagéré des Concerts Pro Arte. Prends donc acte de ce que, l’hiver prochain, nous bifurquons. Ce que je ferai, comment je le ferai, j’en sais encore rien.¹⁰⁰

Cuvelier responded with a business-like tone, although he does take one dig at Collaer in the opening paragraph, “[ta lettre] dénote une certaine acrimonie et une mauvaise humeur comme on en rencontre chez les vieillards.” This accusation preyed upon Collaer’s perception of himself as a champion of new music and his emerging insecurities about his diminishing role at the

¹⁰⁰Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier, 3 March 1932. ASPH, Box 5.

forefront of modern music in Brussels. Cuvelier continued, reminding Collaer that the partnership had come about primarily because the Concerts Pro Arte had been struggling financially, and that “Le 10e anniversaire n’était pas un anniversaire financier, mais purement artistique, dont toi seul as toujours pris responsabilité; il était par conséquent juste que toi seul recueilles les fruits de cette séance.” Cuvelier ended the letter with a request for Collaer to enumerate in more detail his specific grievances with the Société Philharmonique.¹⁰¹

Collaer composed his response the following day. He reiterated his sense that the Pro Arte was not “at home” at the Société Philharmonique, and that the issue of the deficit might have been less grievous with better administration on the part of the society.¹⁰² Collaer also addressed Cuvelier’s barb that he was reacting in the manner of an old man: “Crois bien, mon vieux, que je suis dénué d’acrimonie. Mais je sens que je suis plus jeune et plus vigoureux que jamais, et je veux marcher de l’avant. [...] Comme il y a dix ans, je me sens seul avec mon petit groupe à me rendre un compte exacte des difficultés présents.”¹⁰³ With this assertion, Collaer once more created an impression of his isolation from the rest of the musical scene in Brussels

Despite the heated exchange of letters between Collaer and Cuvelier that projected a split between the Pro Arte and the Société Philharmonique, the 1932–33 season went forward. Though Collaer declared the necessity of the split, the closing of his 3 March 1932 letter (“Ce que je ferai, comment je le ferai, j’en sais encore rien”), indicated that he was not equipped to achieve the separation. Originally scheduled to be a four-concert series, the last concert of 1933 was cancelled because the Quatour Pro Arte was not available. Collaer, however, continued to

¹⁰¹Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier, 4 March 1932. ASPH, Box 5.

¹⁰²Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier, 5 March 1932. ASPH, Box 5.

¹⁰³Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier, 5 March 1932. ASPH, Box 5.

plan these concerts, despite the bitterness toward the Société Philharmonique. He arranged for the first concert to include the premiere of Francis Poulenc's septet for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn and piano, with the composer conducting; Anton Webern's Quartet for violin, clarinet, saxophone, and piano, op. 22; Arnold Schoenberg's *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*; Vladimir Nabokoff's *Le Cœur de Don Quichotte*; and Henri Sauguet's *Polymètres* for soprano and piano. Collaer secured the participation of all the performers at no cost.¹⁰⁴

Upon receiving Collaer's plans for the two concerts of the following season (1933–34), Cuvelier responded, "Je suis très heureux de voir que, contrairement à ce que je pensais, tu prends toujours intérêt aux concerts Pro Arte; je dois dire que j'ai cru un moment que, pour des raisons personnelles, tu comptais les abandonner."¹⁰⁵ In turn, Cuvelier proposed a third concert for the season, which would be presented both in Brussels and Antwerp, featuring Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat* and *Le Renard*, as well as a new work by Hindemith that had been commissioned by the Concerts d'Anvers—the whole performance would include choreography by Sonia Korty.

Collaer's response to Cuvelier's surprise in his continued interest in the Pro Arte was characteristic of his commitment to the Concerts Pro Arte:

Je te répète ce que j'ai déjà dit et écrit à plusieurs reprises: les Concerts Pro Arte, qui ont tenu le champ pendant onze ans, grâce à mon travail et à mon obstination, m'intéressent toujours. [...] Ne perds pas de vue non plus que je n'ai jamais de motifs personnels pour agir dans tel ou tel sens, mais uniquement des motifs musicaux.¹⁰⁶

Despite this declaration of loyalty to the series and to musical goals, Collaer was in a difficult position. As the Concerts Pro Arte were officially connected to the Société Philharmonique, his

¹⁰⁴Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier, 14 June 1933. ASPH, Box 8.

¹⁰⁵Marcel Cuvelier to Paul Collaer, 15 June 1933. ASPH, Box 8.

¹⁰⁶Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier, 16 June 1933. ASPH, Box 8.

only choices were to abandon the series or to take part in the larger organization despite his differences with the directors.¹⁰⁷ Yet with the overwhelming market dominance of the Palais des Beaux-Arts (PBA), Collaer could not effect the separation that he demanded in his earlier letters to Cuvelier.

Several months later, Collaer appraised Le Bœuf of his position, writing that he had reached an agreement with the Quatuor Pro Arte to give two concerts during the 1933–34 season, “de façon à ne pas interrompre, malgré les difficultés actuelles, la série des Concerts Pro Arte.” The proposed program included works by Milhaud, Koechlin, Webern, Schoenberg, and Hindemith.¹⁰⁸ Relations between Collaer and the quartet, however, were also breaking down. A letter from cellist Germain Prévost to Cuvelier, dated eleven days after Collaer’s, contains Prévost’s refusal to perform with Collaer.¹⁰⁹ At the end of 1934, it was the tension between the quartet and Collaer that ultimately led to the end of the Concerts Pro Arte in their original form. Collaer proposed a solution Cuvelier:

Tu vois, de plus en plus, qu’il est impossible de travailler avec le quatuor, dans le cadre actuel. Je crois mon idée bonne: supprimer les concerts Pro Arte. Alors, dans la société de musique de chambre que projette M. Le Bœuf, on peut placer un ou deux concerts du quatuor Pro Arte, et je peux, à un autre concert, faire entendre les œuvres de piano ou les mélodies, sonates contemporains importants.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷Collaer gave a lecture, “Musique ancienne et temps nouveaux,” at Charles Leirens’s Maison d’Art in May 1933. Collaer’s association with Leirens’s society suggests that he maintained his independence from Le Bœuf’s enterprise, and even was looking elsewhere for collaborators during this period of intense disagreement with the administration of the Société Philharmonique. Leirens founded the Maison d’Art in part in reaction to the increasingly conservative programming at the Palais des Beaux-Arts (see chapter 5). An announcement for Collaer’s lecture is part of the Fonds Fauconnier, AVB, Box 70.

¹⁰⁸Paul Collaer to Henry Le Bœuf, 1 October 1933. ASPH, Box 7.

¹⁰⁹Prévost only alluded to his reasons in the letter, writing “Les raisons, tu les connais assez pour comprendre mon attitude et il n’est plus nécessaire de te les rappeler.” Germain Prévost to Marcel Cuvelier, 11 October 1933. ASPH, Box 8.

¹¹⁰Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier, 22 March 1934. ASPH, Box 8.

In January 1936, the Société Philharmonique, in collaboration with the American patron Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, revived the Concerts Pro Arte. The series of chamber concerts featured the quartet, was funded by Coolidge, and was offered to university students at no charge in Brussels, Antwerp, Malines, Liège, and Leuven.¹¹¹ Coolidge's conception of musical life in the United States in many ways closely paralleled Le Bœuf's and the Société Philharmonique's agendas. In 1935, Gaston Verhuyck-Coulon wrote to Bartók, suggesting that during the Quatuor Pro Arte's stay in Belgium in January 1936, they might organize a performance of all of the composer's quartets, in the same manner that they had performed a series of concerts dedicated to the complete quartets by Beethoven, funded by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge during the 1934–35 and 1935–36 seasons.¹¹² For her work, Coolidge was nominated to be an honorary member of the general assembly of the Société Philharmonique.¹¹³

Contributions to other Organizations

Although Collaer devoted most of his musical efforts on the Concerts Pro Arte and his musical criticism during the 1920s and early 1930s, he also cultivated professional relationships with other cultural administrators in Brussels, including the directors of the TRM. He acted as an advisor and intermediary, encouraging the directors of the Concerts Populaires, the Société Philharmonique, and the opera company to consider programming the works of composers whose chamber pieces appeared on the Concerts Pro Arte programs. In this capacity, Collaer was

¹¹¹“Les Concerts Pro Arte-Coolidge. Concerts Pour Etudiants,” ASPH, Box 11. See also Barr, *Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge*, 26.

¹¹²Gaston Verhuyck to Béla Bartók, 16 November 1935. Fonds Verhuyck, KBR, Ms. 467/I/26. Reprinted in Yves Lenoir, “À propos de quelques documents du Fonds Gaston Verhuyck,” *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 35, no. 1 (1993–1994): 165–67.

¹¹³See agenda for the 24 September 1935 meeting of the Conseil d'administration, Box 11, Archives de la Société Philharmonique, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels.

working as an outsider, and always with an eye toward his goals for the Concerts Pro Arte. As Collaer did not move in the same social circles as Le Bœuf and his fellow patrons, Collaer's relationship to this group remained largely one of professional associations.

As Annik Halmes and Olivia Wahnnon de Oliveira point out, for instance, Collaer was instrumental to the project of the French-language premiere of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* in Brussels in 1932.¹¹⁴ But Collaer's participation was strictly reserved to the process of choosing repertoire, and not with the production itself. Berg's letters to his wife from Brussels suggest that he felt a greater affinity with Collaer and his project than with that of the opera company. Berg was greeted at the train station by Elsa Collaer and pianist Stephan Askenase rather than a representative from the TRM. He socialized with the Collaers rather than with the leaders of the opera house. After the first day of rehearsals at the TRM, he dined with the Collaers, whom he described to his wife as "simple people with a lot of idealism."¹¹⁵ Furthermore, his frustration over the musical interpretation of his work by de Thoran, he contrasted the opera company with the Concerts Pro Arte: "[The TRM] is a very elegant (royal) institution with three directors, therefore conservative by its very nature. On Saturday they have the hundredth performance of *Marouf*. The artistic opposite pole to that is the Pro Arte Society—but I've not met them yet."¹¹⁶ *Wozzeck* was only one of many works that Collaer backed. He campaigned for works to be staged at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, including Darius Milhaud's *Choéphores*, at the Concerts Populaires, and at the Société Philharmonique.

¹¹⁴Annik Halmes and Olivia Wahnnon de Olivera, "Échanges épistolaires autour de la production de *Wozzeck* d'Alban Berg au Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie en 1932," *Revue belge de musicologie/ Belgisch tijdschrift voor muziekwetenschap* 58 (2004): 251–86.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Alban Berg to Helene Berg, 24 February 1932, in *Alban Berg: Letters to his Wife*, ed. and trans. Bernard Grun (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), 385.

Collaer after the Société Philharmonique

After he stepped down from his position at the Concerts Pro Arte following difficulties with his partnership with Henry Le Bœuf and the Société Philharmonique, Collaer founded a second series, the Concerts Anciens et Modernes. In the 1930s, he became increasingly involved in the performance and study of early music, collaborating with musicologist Charles Van den Borren and viola da gamba specialist Safford Cape. Collaer also began to write ethnomusicological studies. In 1936, he accepted the position of music director for the Flemish-language section of the I.N.R./N.I.R (Institut national de Radiodiffusion/Nationaal Instituut voor Radio-Omroep), where he continued to program little-known music, both new and old.

The nature of Collaer's isolation from the major musical organizations in Brussels before 1936 offers several explanations for his continuing legacy as the representative figure in the story of the city as a center for new music in the 1920s and 1930s. First, his fierce independence, both in his writing and in his concert management, cast him as a modern artist, experimenting with new ideas, independent from outside influences, and unconcerned with conformity to "schools" or to public taste.¹¹⁷

Second, Collaer's international connections made his concerts—and therefore the city—visible to foreign composers and musicians. His concerts exposed members of the cultural elite in Brussels to a wide range of new music, and Collaer campaigned for performances of works that were beyond the means of the Concerts Pro Arte in other venues. For this reason, the concerts were important to the recovery and expansion of musical life in Brussels after the war. Many composers found opportunities for the performance of their symphonic works and operas after their smaller works appeared on the programs of the Concerts Pro Arte.

¹¹⁷This is the version of the modern artist that Robert Wangermée embraces in the first chapter of his *La Musique belge contemporaine*.

Third, Collaer's influence through his post at the radio allowed him to continue his work new music on a grander scale. Not insignificantly, it was at the radio that Robert Wangermée, the leading biographer and apologist for Collaer and his methods, met, and worked with, Collaer. As both a living source of anecdotes about Collaer, and as a respected scholar, Wangermée's interpretations on the impact of the Concerts Pro Arte have influenced almost all other studies of Collaer.

Collaer's effect on Brussels's musical life in the 1920s through his Concerts Pro Arte was undeniable. Before his appointment at the radio, Collaer's successes rested in his isolation from the circles of the social elite, his distance from other musical organizations, and his alignment with the musical life in Paris. His position as a key player in Brussels, despite his relative isolation from the social and political network of patrons and organizers, relied heavily on the musicians he gathered around him—particularly Darius Milhaud and the Quartet Pro Arte.

CHAPTER 3: CORNEIL DE THORAN'S STEWARDSHIP OF THE THEATRE ROYAL DE LA MONNAIE

In August 2012, during the first week of my research year in Brussels, I overheard on the tram an elegant gentleman in his seventies (and a self-professed monarchist) speaking with a woman who had recently joined the chorus at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie (TRM). He recounted the story of the riot on 25 August 1830 performance of Daniel Auber's *La Muette de Portici*. The gentleman described the scene of the audience flowing out of the theater and into the streets in protest against the Dutch king William of Orange's oppressive reign over Flanders and Wallonia. The demonstration, sparked the Belgian Revolution. This conversation, and the nodding people around me in the tram who were also listening to the well-known story, told me how Belgians still placed the TRM at the heart of their nation's history. Although historians have offered more nuanced interpretations of the events surrounding that night in 1830, the popular version, told by the gentleman on the tram, has occupied the Belgian national imagination for almost two hundred years.¹

The city and the TRM perpetuate this dramatic version of history that links the opera house to the political origins of the Belgian nation.² During the "Jours du Patrimoine," for

¹Sonia Slatin, for instance, views this narrative critically. She argues that the Belgian revolutionaries probably chose that particular production in advance due to its symbolic significance as part of William of Orange's birthday celebrations in Brussels. The king was present at the theater that night. She points out that the 25 August 1830 performance of the work was not the first one that year, suggesting that the presence of the king and the circumstances of the evening, rather than the rousing words of Maniello, spurred the Belgian revolutionaries into action. "Opera and Revolution: *La Muette de Portici* and the Belgian Revolution of 1830 Revisited," *Journal of Musicological Research* 3, no. 1–2 (1979): 45–62.

²Homi Bhabha discusses the importance of narratives and the imagined collective existence of people belonging to a nation in his preface to *Nation and Narration*, (London: Routledge, 1990); see also Gerard Delanty, *The*

instance, Belgians celebrate the capital's heritage. Historically significant buildings are open to the public. The TRM's tours of its workshops and theater are among the highlights of the festival. Over and over again, guides at the TRM recount the story of the 1830 revolution as a defining moment for the opera house, its company, and the nation.³ The lore of the heroism of the revolutionaries at the TRM have confirmed the opera house's status in a national narrative. The theater also enjoys an international reputation. In the last three decades of the nineteenth century especially, the TRM was a center for staging new French operas and French translations of German works.⁴ The national and international profiles of the TRM do not contradict each other, but together contribute to the received wisdom about the major importance of a relatively small opera house in a relatively small European city.

The story of the TRM's close relationship with the political origins of the nation, and its continued contribution to Belgium's cultural status, had established it as a *lieu de mémoire* by the middle of the nineteenth century. The theater was always a visible part of national events, staging gala performances in celebration of anniversaries, coronations, and royal weddings.⁵ The

Cosmopolitan Imagination: The Renewal of Critical Social Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 74. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (New York: Verso, 2006).

³The building's façade was featured on the program of the 2013 "Journées de Bruxelles," along with that of the Musée des Instruments de Musique and the Arc du Cinquentaire. The theme of the 2013 festival, "Bruxelles, m'as-tu vu?" celebrated places that had been important to the city's history and that continue to contribute to the arts, politics, cultural activities, and intellectual pursuits in the twenty-first century. Program for the Journées du Patrimoine, 14–15 September 2013, Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, http://visitbrussels.be/bitc/static/minisite/img/monument/brochures/JEP_2013_FR_WEB.pdf (accessed 8 September 2014).

⁴Opera companies in other Belgian cities had—and continue to have—identities distinct from that of the TRM, which is traditionally the "première scène lyrique" in Belgium. In Antwerp, the Vlaamse Opera and the French opera house operated side-by-side. Ghent had its own opera company, as did Liège and Charleroi in Wallonia. These theaters, although offering much of the same repertoire that was performed in Brussels, had a more local flavor than the cosmopolitan atmosphere at the TRM.

⁵Pierre Nora describes, in the most general terms, the concept of the *lieu de mémoire* as "any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community." ("From *Lieux de mémoire* to *Realms of Memory*," preface to *Rethinking the French Past: Realms of Memory*, Vol. 1 *Conflicts and Divisions*, ed. Pierre Nora, trans. Arthur Goldhammer [New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996], xvii). Although the TRM as a *lieu de mémoire*

theater (the building itself and the company that used that building) had what defined, in Pierre Nora's words, a site of memory: a "capacity for change, [an] ability to resurrect old meanings and generate new ones along with new and unforeseeable connections," that set it apart from any other musical organization in the city.⁶ At the TRM, directors are considered stewards of the company's image, both as a symbol of national history and as an international center for new opera. Between the World Wars, such a multifaceted institutional identity relied on a careful process of vetting and manipulating the past, as well as a judicious selection of new works that would at once expose audiences to modern music and ensure the continuation of the theater's reputation as a national landmark in the future. Director Corneil de Thoran and his collaborators ensured the TRM's survival in the face of competition from other musical organizations by looking at once to the past and fitting its future to the narrative of the company's history.

The shadow of Maurice Kufferath and Guillaume Guidé's pre-war direction of the TRM (1900–14) loomed large over the interwar directors.⁷ Although the policies of the directorship, the structures of the seasonal programs, and the organization of the institution itself remained

represents what Nora explains was the earlier, more narrow understanding of the term in the context of his larger project—that of a material place and the invisible bonds that connect it to other such sites of memory—this chapter shows that behind the material representation of the TRM is the intangible element, which includes memories of particularly successful moments in the history of the company, the personalities who shaped the company at particular moments, and the ways the TRM entered into the rhetoric of the nation as a whole. Indeed, Nora's larger project to show that "France is an entirely symbolic reality," also applies to the image of Belgium that emerges through an examination of the TRM and its place in Belgian culture (x).

⁶Pierre Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," in *Rethinking the French Past*, 15.

⁷Frédéric Lemmers argues that after the first two post-war seasons, the makeup of the TRM company bore de Thoran's rather than Kufferath's mark. Although the post-war personnel shifted dramatically in these two seasons, the programming still was very much in line with that of the pre-war administration. Lemmers adopts a particularly rosy view of de Thoran's administration, framing the TRM's mix of grand opera, opéras-comiques, and operettas as a savvy financial move rather than a bid to keep the company going at all costs, as Jeffrey Tyssens does. Frédéric Lemmers, "La logique de troupe et ses implications sur la programmation," in *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 77, 85. Jeffrey Tyssens, "Een *Beggars Opera* in Brussel: Sociale en politieke spanningen in en om de Koninklijke Muntchouwborg, van concessie tot nationaal toneel," in *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 40–75.

largely consistent from 1914 until 1936, the company experienced a fundamental shift in its status, from that of a leading musical institution for introducing new works to the custodian of national memory. Manuel Couvreur lists factors that contributed to this shift: new music-spaces in the city, the rise in popularity of jazz and cinema, and the popularity of such pastimes as spectator sports.⁸ The success of other art music endeavors in Brussels (especially of the Palais des Beaux-Arts) suggests that such an explanation is artificial and does not explain the particular circumstances at the TRM. What Couvreur does not consider, is the theater's relationship with its past. Although shifts in popular entertainment were certainly important factors in the changing cultural practices of the interwar years, this often-repeated explanation for the TRM's financial struggles after World War I does not take into account nuances of the organization within the opera company or its symbolic importance to the nation.

Even though the TRM was quickly becoming one of the most traditional organizations in Brussels in terms of its structure and its repertoire, the administrators for other musical institutions could and did refer to the company's reputation as a bastion of new music and emerging operatic talent (both composers and singers), which had been built in the years before the war, and perpetuated by programming choices after the war.⁹ It was this play of past and future that defined it as a *lieu de mémoire* in Brussels. The company became a symbol of many things at once: a monument to the past and a place where new productions thrived; a national symbol and a place that enjoyed an international reputation; overseen by the city council but

⁸Introduction to *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 1. Other Belgian scholars who attempt to establish a direct cause-and-effect relationship between the rise in other forms of popular entertainment and the decline of the TRM include Pierre Stéphan, *Les années '20-'30: la Belgique entre les deux guerres* (Brussels: Paul Le grain, 1983), 121–22 and 198–206; vol. 2, 64–69; Frédéric Lemmers, “La logique de troupe et ses implications sur la programmation,” in *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 86–7.

⁹Introduction to *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, 3.

dependant on its directors. For this reason, it was in the city's and the nation's interest to perpetuate the theater's traditions and its reputation.

William Gibbons's concept of the operatic museum proves to be a useful tool for my explanation of the interwar identity of the TRM. Gibbons marks the productions of operas by Rameau, Gluck, and Mozart in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century as a sign of "a fundamental shift in the role audiences and producers assigned to the opera houses—a transition from pure entertainment to a kind of retrospective." Operas of the past, in this context, became a tool to assert French authority and power after 1870. In a similar manner, the TRM's relationship to both the past and the present defined the company's programming.¹⁰

The emphasis on the TRM's past, and especially on the memory of the Kufferath-Guidé years, raised questions about the place of new music in the structure of the post-war TRM. A balance between tradition and novelty was key to preserving the company's national and international profiles. Although they could be complementary, de Thoran and his collaborators had to be aware of moments when the new and the old came into conflict with each other in the process of preserving and recasting the narrative of the TRM's place in history. Productions that were touted as new, and therefore framed as crucial to the survival of company's reputation as a leader in Francophone opera, however, were rarely world premieres. Instead, the TRM staged a series of pre-war operas that to some critics had already become dated in the post-war period, and French-language translations of operas that had already proven to be successful abroad. Productions of operas written after World War I (which were only occasionally also world premieres) were often the result of initiatives from outside of the TRM's official structure, as

¹⁰William Gibbons, *Building the Operatic Museum: Eighteenth-Century Opera in Fin-de-Siècle Paris* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 4. See also Jann Pasler, *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

other leaders of the musical world—especially Paul Collaer and Henry Le Bœuf—championed living composers whose concert works had already enjoyed critical or popular success in Brussels. This chapter examines the intimate links to the past that the TRM cultivated during the interwar years—and especially the mythology of modernity as part of both the past and the future—which have been largely overlooked in favor of studies of the new works that were produced there between the wars.

Maurice Kufferath and Guillaume Guidé’s Directorship

In 1926, Adolphe Max unveiled a memorial to Maurice Kufferath and Guillaume Guidé, directors of the TRM from 1900 until 1914, in the foyer of the TRM building. The repertoire that the company offered in that period ranged from baroque works to Wagner to new French, Italian, German, and Spanish operas.¹¹ Paul Spaak, speaking on behalf of the three directors, drew a clear line from the glorious past of Kufferath and Guidé to the present:

De leur passage à la Monnaie, il restera, non seulement leur fière volonté d’en faire, non point une entreprise commerciale, heureuse ou non, selon les résultats de ses bilans, mais une maison d’éducation artistique que nulle autre n’égala. [...] Vous pouvez être assurés, Mesdames et Messieurs, que ce parfait exemple de travail et d’amitié ne sera pas oublié à la Monnaie, aussi longtemps, du moins, que mes collègues et moi la dirigeront.¹²

The memorial was and still is a physical reminder of both world premieres of French operas and the Wagnerian productions that the TRM enjoyed from 1900 to 1914.

Although he shared the directorship of the TRM with Guidé, Kufferath was the figurehead for the company’s pre-war successes. A well-known public figure, he was considered

¹¹In the call for subscriptions to fund the memorial, *L’Eventail* declared the variety of repertoire under Kufferath and Guidé to have made the TRM “un des plus intenses foyers d’art musical et théâtre de l’Europe.” “Choses de théâtre,” *L’Eventail*, 5 April 1925.

¹²“A la mémoire de Kufferath et de Guidé. L’inauguration du mémorial,” *L’Eventail*, 24 January 1926. The unveiling took place before a gala performance of *Lohengrin*.

an arbiter of musical and theatrical taste. In addition to his work as director, he published a series of handbooks on Wagner's operas, wrote reviews for, and eventually became the editor of, *Le Guide musical*, and published larger works, including his book on conducting, *L'Art de diriger*.¹³ Kufferath's reputation in Belgium and abroad rested especially on his campaign in the pages of *Le Guide musical* to help his readers come to a more intimate understanding of Wagner's works. In preparation for each new production at the TRM, a series of articles on the historical, dramaturgical, and musical contexts appeared in the journal. These were also assembled into widely-circulated handbooks. Furthermore, as a translator of German opera libretti into French, Kufferath enjoyed high praise from critics and audiences alike. Octave Maus, for instance, celebrated the TRM as a particularly fertile ground for Wagner performances after the 1914 premiere of Kufferath's translation of *Parsifal*.¹⁴

Enthusiasm for productions of Wagner's operas among the directors of the TRM, coinciding with the performances of new music at Les XX, La Libre Esthétique, and the Concerts Populaires, distinguished Belgian artistic life from that of Paris.¹⁵ The character of the TRM as a place for musical experimentation, however, outstripped the memory of any single opera. As director and a public figure who had shaped history, Kufferath became an important character in the city's construction of the company's history. He offered a conceptual bridge

¹³For a detailed analysis of Kufferath's writing on Wagner, see Reinder Pols, "La plus saisissante impression d'art ressentie par la présente génération". Over Maurice Kufferaths Wagerdramaturgie," in *La Monnaie wagnérienne*, ed. Manuel Couvreur (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 1998), 79–116.

¹⁴"Bien que les directeurs du Théâtre de la Monnaie aient droit d'un et l'autre à notre reconnaissance pour l'admirable spectacle qu'ils nous offrirent hier, — c'est que la soirée triomphale à laquelle nous venons d'assister est, pour M. Kufferath, le couronnement de toute une vie consacrée à l'exégèse et à la diffusion des drames de Wagner, l'aboutissement d'efforts incessants, la réalisation d'un rêve magnifique formé le jour même où le sort, en le plaçant à la tête d'un grand théâtre lyrique, mit dans ses mains l'instrument capable de donner un corps à ses plus ambitieuses aspirations d'artiste." Octave Maus, "Parsifal," *L'Art moderne* 34, no. 1 (4 January 1914): 3.

¹⁵Couvreur, Introduction to *La Monnaie wagnérienne*, ii–iii; Eliane Gubin and Roland Van der Hoeven, "Les premières manifestations wagnériennes à Bruxelles," in *La Monnaie wagnérienne*, ed. Manuel Couvreur (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 1998), 1–23.

between pre- and postwar Belgian culture, as he lived through the first year after Belgian liberation.

In August 1914, the TRM suspended its operations in anticipation of the German occupation of Brussels. Kufferath went into exile in Geneva during the war; many of the members of the regular company entered military service (see, for instance chapter 4 for a discussion of Corneil de Thoran's wartime musical work), and others went into exile in Britain, Switzerland, Australia, and the United States. Only Jean Van Glabbeke, an administrative clerk, remained to oversee the TRM's buildings, scores, costumes, sets, and other properties. During the occupation, German authorities regularly requisitioned the opera house, where German-language productions were performed by visiting German opera companies for audiences principally of German officers.¹⁶ Belgians generally boycotted these productions, and those who did choose to attend were ostracized. In March 1915, for instance, word spread that Georges Dwelshauvers, a professor of philosophy at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), attended a concert organized by the German occupiers. He was condemned by the Conseil d'Administration de l'Université for his presence at the concert. Although the condemnation was private, it was leaked, and the German occupiers in turn accused the university of being hostile to Germany.¹⁷

¹⁶The Fonds de l'Instruction Publique at the Archives de la Ville de Bruxelles (AVB) includes clippings and programs from this period at the TRM, dating from May 1915 through the end of October 1918, including an undated photo of the German artists who performed Wagner's *Ring* in front of the façade of the theater, and accompanied by two armed German soldiers; a program for two concerts of German music by the Berlin Philharmonic directed by Felix Weingartner on 4 and 5 May 1915; posters for the full *Ring des Nibelungen* staged in May 1916 and November 1917; a program for *Tristan und Isolde*, performed by the Hofoper Stuttgart, 27 January 1918; concerts presented by the Deutsche Symphonie-Orchester-Brüssel; and theatrical productions staged by the Deutsches Theater in Brüssel, under the direction of S. Schmidt (AVB, IP- 2956). A history of performance at the TRM during the war has yet to be written.

¹⁷For more on Dwelshauvers, see Roland Van Der Hoeven, "Les représentations à la Monnaie (1875–1914)," in *La Monnaie wagnérienne*, ed. Manuel Couvreur (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 1998), 64–65. Le Bœuf recounted the incident in a letter to Queen Elisabeth on 8 June 1915. He wrote about the very limited number of musical performances in Brussels outside of those at the requisitioned the TRM. Le Bœuf concluded that Dwelshauvers and the Belgian poet Knopff, who was also known to have attended performances at the TRM at that time, were "Deux

Within a month of the city's liberation and the royal family's return to the capital, the TRM reopened. Still wearing his army uniform, Corneil de Thoran conducted the second act of Auber's *La Muette de Portici*, a symbolic gesture that reaffirmed Belgian autonomy and the TRM's status as a key cultural institution by reclaiming the theater by reenacting to its most important historical moment—the 1830 performance of the same opera.

Stewardship, Ownership, and the Concession System

In late 1918, Maurice Kufferath returned to Brussels and took up his position as director of the TRM. Guidé had died during the war, and Kufferath sought the collaboration of conductor Corneil de Thoran and the administrator Van Glabbeke as his co-directors. The reconstituted administration, with Kufferath at the helm, promised to pick up where things had been left off in 1914. The infrastructure of the TRM had remained in place: it continued to be an exclusively francophone company operating on a concessionary system.

After the liberation of the Belgian capital, Kufferath continued his concession that had not yet run out in August 1914. When he died on 8 December 1919, however, his successors had to be chosen. At least on paper, the continuation of Corneil de Thoran and Jean Van Glabbeke's positions as co-directors, assigned to them by Kufferath after the war, could not be taken for granted. Shortly after Kufferath's death, the Conseil Communal received self-nominations from candidates throughout Belgium and from France. The letters reflect the different versions of the TRM that existed in the minds of the applicants. Among the most detailed of these documents is that of the pianist, composer, and music critic Paul La Gye, dated 31 December 1919. He conceived of the TRM's role as that of a traditional part of national musical culture—as a venue

irréfléchis, plus détraqués que coupables.” Archives du Secrétariat de la Reine Elisabeth (ASRE), Archives du Palais Royal, Brussels, AE 668.

for the performance of works by native composers above all else. La Gye's letter included a twelve-point essay on the role of the company and the responsibility of the director, which was to be: "du patriotisme en action! Je dis en action, car il ne suffit pas de claime: J'aime l'art de mon pays, et je me conforme le mieux possible aux clauses d'un cahier des charges (combien indulgent), il s'agit d'encourager cet Art après tous les moyens et lui donner la place qui lui revient."¹⁸ By contrast, L. Chokier and J.-E. Strauwen proposed a joint directorship that would reestablish the TRM's international reputation above all, using the direction of Joseph Dupont (1886–89) as a model.¹⁹

Ultimately, de Thoran and Van Glabbeke agreed to a two-year contract, followed by an extension, in collaboration with a third director, Paul Spaak, lasting from 1 August 1920 through 31 July 1928. De Thoran and Van Glabbeke had the support of much of the company. Their candidacy file includes petitions from the chorus, corps de ballet, costumers, machinists, and orchestra supporting their bid for the concession.²⁰ The wording of these documents is almost identical, emphasizing the artistic pursuits of the directors, their work to make the TRM an internationally-recognized theater, and their dedication to preserve Belgian patrimony through

¹⁸Paul La Gye, Quelques considérations à propos de la Direction du Théâtre de la Monnaie, AVB, IP II 3013. Emphasis in original.

¹⁹L. Chokier and J.E. Strauwen to Collège des Echevins, received 8 January 1920, AVB, IP II 3013. Other candidates included the director of the Théâtre Royal de Liège; poet, music critic, and composer Fernand Leurieux; and Eugène Domergue, director of the Théâtre de Vaudeville in Brussels. Lucien Hennuyer, a singer who claims to have sung at the TRM under Kufferath and Guidé, also nominated himself, indicating that de Thoran and Van Glabbeke would be his co-directors. I have yet to find any more information on Hennuyer. For the candidacy letter for the concession beginning in September 1920, see AVB, IP II 3013.

²⁰Petition from the Chefs de Service du Théâtre de la Monnaie to the Collège des Echevins, 29 December 1919, AVB, IP II 3013. Among those who signed this document were conductors Maurice Bastin, Charles Strony; director P. Chereaux; choreographer François Ambrosiny; and set designer Delescluze, as well as the chefs du chœur, stage managers, etc. Petition received by the Collège des Echevins, 20 December 1919, AVB, IP II 3013; Secrétaire Général L. du Portail for the Choristes du Théâtre de la Monnaie to the Collège des Echevins, 24 December 1919, AVB, IP II 3013. This letter was signed by seventy-three members of TRM's company. This letter was sent, despite de Thoran and Van Glabbeke's request to the company at the TRM not to send such petitions to the Collège (see letter from de Thoran to Adolphe Max, 29 December 1919, AVB, IP II 3013). The orchestra followed suit, sending a shorter letter of support on 2 January 1920 (AVB, IP II 3013).

their stewardship of the TRM. The new contract, in effect, was a continuation of Kufferath's legacy.

As directors, de Thoran, Van Glabbeke, and Spaak received less attention in the press for their direction than did Kufferath and Guidé. All three remained relatively shadowy figures without strong personalities. It was the theater, of which they were stewards, that received attention and which was assigned its own agency. In the press, de Thoran appears as a relatively flat character, who received praise almost as a matter of course for each performance he conducted, but little recognition for his administrative position, such as negotiations with composers and singers, and the design of each season's program. Van Glabbeke was mentioned even less. Paul Spaak had made a name for himself as a playwright before he joined the TRM's directorial team, and as a result, the press often approached him independently from his position at the opera company. Their varied expertise, however, made them well suited to the project of directing the company after the war and Kufferath's death.

Corneil de Thoran, Jean Van Glabbeke, and Paul Spaak

Corneil de Thoran, born in Liège and a product of the Conservatoire Royal de Liège, studied conducting with Sylvain Dupuis and composition with Jean-Théodore Radoux. From 1902 until 1911, he held a series of conducting posts in France and Belgium.²¹ De Thoran's first contract with the TRM was as the second conductor for the 1911–12 season. After his interpretations of *Le Secret de Suzanne* by Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari and the world premiere of *Rhena* by the Belgian composer Jean Van den Eeden, his contract was extended for another three seasons. In 1915, he joined the military, and was assigned to telegraph operations, but he worked principally as a

²¹For a list of these posts, see Gilles Remy, "Corneil de Thoran (1881–1953): La plus longue carrière de chef d'orchestre et de directeur de la Monnaie," in *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 280.

musician. He was an accompanist for benefit concerts, and later secured permission to form an orchestra of professional musicians who had enlisted in the army. Among his superiors in the army at the time were General Baron Buffin and lieutenant-colonel Paul Giron (the future director of the Palais des Beaux-Arts).²² The Orchestre Symphonique de l'Armée en Campagne was officially created in October 1917 (for more on the OSAC and de Thoran's musical wartime activities supported by Queen Elisabeth, see chapter 4). When he returned to Brussels after the war, he shed his image as a musical hero of the military by concentrating his energies on the TRM. De Thoran's biography after the war, during his time as the director of the TRM, is fragmented at best. In the daily press and art journals, his name appeared when he conducted opera productions, but when critics commented on decisions about the company's programming, agency was almost always assigned to the theater and not to its directors. It is reasonable to assume, however, that the programs at the TRM carried de Thoran's stamp of approval and were indicative of his tastes as artistic director. Indeed, it is impossible to separate de Thoran as a public figure from his position at the TRM, or to separate the TRM from its artistic director.²³ As director of the national opera company, de Thoran also appeared in the society columns, attending private salons hosted by the aristocracy. The most significant of these connections were his links to the royal court, where he attended the queen's many private gatherings.

Because Van Glabbeke (1877–1943) worked primarily behind the scenes, very little was published about his life. His brother, Pierre, wrote a biography in 1973. Jean Van Glabbeke, born in 1877 in Ostende, moved with his family to the capital in 1893. Fluent in French and Flemish,

²²Ibid., 285.

²³An article published in the journal *La face à main* (22, no. 26 [20 June 1946]: 3–4) in 1946 illustrates the persistent connection between the director and his theater. Despite the article's title, "M. Corneil de Thoran. Directeur du Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie depuis 1918," and the fact that the journal printed de Thoran's portrait on the cover of that issue, the author focused on the history of the TRM rather than the director's biography. The article outlines the achievements of the theater during de Thoran's tenure, but offers very little insight into de Thoran's personality.

and with a working knowledge of English and German, Van Glabbeke was recruited by the director general of the Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts to work at an information desk for the Brussels 1897 World's Fair. When the fair ended, Van Glabbeke continued to work for the Instruction Publique. When the bookkeeper for the TRM retired in 1902, Van Glabbeke was assigned to the position, and later Kufferath and Guidé entrusted him with more administrative duties. With the outbreak of the war, Van Glabbeke continued to manage the TRM's building, and as his brother recounted, it was at Van Glabbeke's home that de Thoran learned of his new position as co-director of the TRM:

Et ici se place un moment émouvant. Le dimanche 17 novembre 1918 vers 5 heures de l'après-midi alors que des groupes allemands occupaient encore certains endroits de la ville et que notamment des mitrailleurs étaient installés sur les toits de la Grand Poste, un vigoureux coup de sonnette entendue à la porte de l'appartement que mon frère et sa famille occupaient au 5e étage du Continental. Je me trouvais chez eux à ce moment et j'allai ouvrir. Un militaire en kakhi était devant moi. Me voyant hésiter une fraction de seconde le visiteur écria "de Thoran!" et me tombe dans les bras. Lâchant son unité, bousculant tous les postes, Corneil de Thoran arrivait chez nous avec une avance de plusieurs jours sur nos glorieux régiments. C'est en ce moment qu'il apprit qu'il postulait la Direction de la Monnaie.²⁴

Although Pierre Van Glabbeke detailed de Thoran's return to Brussels and the opening performance at the TRM, he glossed over the rest of the interwar period in this document, offering only the most general sense of the TRM's activities in the 1920s and 1930s. A rare portrait of Van Glabbeke in *L'Eventail* in 1925, offered more insight into his position at the TRM. The article described Van Glabbeke as having the ideal personality for the role of administrator; he was a level-headed realist among eccentric artists.²⁵

²⁴Pierre Van Glabbeke, "Comment peut-on devenir Directeur du TRM," handwritten manuscript, 11 September 1973, Collection des Archives Privées/Verzameling van Privéarchief (Archives de la Société des Artistes Belges), 2, Van Glabbeke, AVB. See also Jeffrey Tyssens, "Een *Beggars Opera* in Brussel).

²⁵"Nos Contemporains. Jean Van Glabbeke," *L'Eventail*, 16 August 1925.

Figure 3.1– Caricatures of Corneil de Thoran, Jean Van Glabbeke, and Paul Spaak, *L'Eventail*, 30 July, 13 and 20 August 1922



Paul Spaak (1871–1936), the third member of the directorial team that shaped the TRM’s activities between the wars, trained as a lawyer but made his name as a poet and writer.²⁶ Like many of his contemporaries, Spaak studied law at the ULB in the last decade of the nineteenth century. He established himself before the war as a writer, poet, critic, lecturer, and he taught French literature courses at the ULB beginning in 1897. Spaak wrote prolifically and in a diverse range of genres, from plays to academic texts to literary criticism.²⁷ His private journal, which he kept from 1928 until his death in 1936, offers insight into his personality. Spaak wrote about his thoughts on Christianity (he was an atheist), women (his writing reflects a misogynist attitude²⁸), relationships to the past (“L’homme marche vers l’avenir en regardant le passé; en s’explique ses chutes”²⁹), and his emphatic individualism (“Seul l’individu peut faire quelque chose de bon ou de beau. La foule ne fait que des sottises: la guerre et les pèlerinages”³⁰). At the TRM, his

²⁶Spaak began his career working for the progressive lawyer Paul Janson. His contributions to *Le Journal des Tribunaux* were among his first articles for the press. He married Janson’s daughter Marie, who became the first woman in the Belgian senate. Their sons distinguished themselves in politics and the arts as well. Paul-Henri Spaak (1899–72) served as the Prime Minister of Belgium and later as the first president of the United Nations General Assembly. Charles Spaak (1903–75) was a screenwriter who worked with Jean Renoir, among others. Claude Spaak (1904–90) was a celebrated playwright.

²⁷For more on Spaak’s biography, see André Rousseau, “Spaak, Paul-Louis-François,” *Biographie Nationale* vol. 38 (Brussels: Établissements Émile Bruylant, 1973), 735–44. H. Hoffmann, “Paul Spaak, der Mensch der Lyriker. Ein Beitrag zum Studium der belgischen Literatur,” Ph.D. diss., Institut für Theaterwissenschaft an der Universität Wien, 1960; and José Mirval, *Le littérateur belge Paul Spaak* (Brussels: L. Librecht, 1938).

²⁸For instance, “Le mâle donne; la femelle reçoit. Toutes les prétentions féministes à l’égalité ne changeront rien à cette vérité à foncière,” and “La femme est à la fois le plus utile et le plus dangereux des animaux domestiques.” Paul Spaak, *Journal Personnel*, July 1928, 21 [paragraph 112]; January 1929, 24 [paragraph 921]. Paul Spaak, *Journal Personnel*, 1928, Archives et Musée de la Littérature, Brussels, MLT 00084,

²⁹Paul Spaak, *Journal Personnel*, June 1928, [paragraph 73], Archives et Musée de la Littérature, Brussels, MLT 00084.

³⁰Spaak never intended that his journal would be published, freeing him to write for himself rather than for others. Spaak wrote in December 1928: “C’est ce qui me charme dans ce journal. Sachant que je ne le publierai pas, je ne l’écris que pour moi. Je ne songe pas au public; je ne lui parle pas; je ne y mets rien pour lui. Je tâche de voir un peu clair en moi, pour moi.” *Journal Personnel*, December 1928, [paragraph 751] and [paragraph 166], Archives et Musée de la Littérature, Brussels, MLT 00084.

principal role was to oversee the literary quality and the translations of the company's productions.

Spaak's role as translator was particularly important to the TRM. As the leading French-language opera house presenting Wagnerian music dramas at the turn of the nineteenth century, the TRM put great emphasis on its productions of foreign works in French translation. This continued into the interwar years. Maurice Kufferath had made a name for himself as a gifted translator of German libretti—especially of Wagner—before the war. Spaak took on this role in the interwar period. Although the tradition of translating original opera libretti, and particularly the status of opera libretti as works of art in their own right, came under criticism starting in the last years of the nineteenth century, the practice continued at the TRM, as it was an exclusively Francophone company until the mid-1950s.³¹

Spaak wrote an extended letter in 1924 to Emile Jacqmain, the minister of arts and sciences, defending the TRM's practice of staging new productions—many of them translations—that could not pay for themselves through ticket receipts.

En ce qui concerne la question relative aux représentations d'opéras qui se donnent en déficit, même lorsque la salle et les couloirs sont comblés, il est exact que certaines œuvres entraînent des frais d'exécution qui dépassent le maximum de la recette possible. Ce sont des œuvres, telles Parsifal, Armide, Boris Godounow, qui exigent qu'aux dépenses ordinaires de la troupe et du personnel, s'ajoutent celles d'une nombreuse figuration, de musiciens supplémentaires...etc.

³¹For more on the politics of translation at the TRM, see Jean-Louis Jan and Gérard Loubinoux, "Les productions francophones des opéras de Wagner à la Monnaie," and Malou Haine, "Les Prestations Bruxelloises du ténor wagnérien Ernest Van Dyck de 1883 à 1912," *La Monnaie wagnérienne*, ed. Manuel Couvreur (Brussels: Université libre de Bruxelles, 1998); Frédéric Lemmers, "La logique de troupe," 88. For broader discussions, see Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator" (1923 essay), *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings* vol. 1, 1913–1926, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: Bellknap Press, 1996), 253–63; Annegret Fauser and Mark Everist, eds., *Music, Theater, and Cultural Transfer: Paris, 1830–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Gérard Loubinoux, "Traduire l'opéra," *Annales littéraires de l'Université de Franche-Comté* 2 (1997): 255–68; Herbert F. Peyeser, "Some Observations on Translation," *The Musical Quarterly* 8 no. 3 (July 1922): 353–71; Laura Tunbridge, "Singing Translations: The Politics of Listening Between the Wars," *Representations* 123, no. 1 (Summer 2013), 53–86. Tunbridge points out that the attitude toward translations of songs, concert works, and opera were different, citing a case of libel that the singer Stuart Wilson brought against the BBC for publishing in *Radio Times* a letter criticizing his pronunciation in a 1933 performance of Bach's St. Matthew's Passion in (63–6).

Commercialement parlant, il n'y a que les œuvres du répertoire c'est-à-dire celles qui peuvent être reprises chaque année (Faust, Carmen, Manon, et quelques autres) qui ont amorti leurs frais de décors et de costumes.

Depuis 1900, c'est-à-dire durant la direction Kufferath et Guidé et durant la nôtre, trois ouvrages seulement, *La Bohème*, *Madame Butterfly* et *la Tosca*, ont pu être maintenues au répertoire, ont donc couvert leurs frais.

Spaak listed the major premieres that had taken place at the TRM since 1900, concluding:

Il n'est pas un second théâtre lyrique au monde qui pourrait aligner une série d'ouvrages équivalentes, témoignant d'un pareil effort au services de l'art dramatique et musical.

Nul n'oserait prétendre que ces œuvres qui coutèrent plus qu'elles n'ont rapporté ne devaient point être montées à la Monnaie. C'est à leur représentation, et non à la reprise d'œuvres du répertoire qu'est due, en effet, la renommée universelle de notre première scène lyrique, et ce n'est qu'en conservant à son activité un caractère plus artistique que commercial, que cette renommée sera maintenue.³²

The TRM continued to turn to translations of Puccini's operas to ensure ticket sales. The opening performance of the TRM after World War I included the popular 1895 translation of *Pagliacci*. *Tosca* and *Madame Butterfly* were also included regularly on the TRM's program, beginning in the spring of 1919. For the 1921–22 season, the directors convinced Puccini to allow a translation by Paul Ferrier of *Gianni Schicchi* to appear without the other two works of *Il Trittico*. The TRM performance was the first of the opera in French.³³ Puccini died in Brussels in November 1924. In honor of the composer, the TRM scheduled a performance of *La Bohème* shortly after his death.³⁴ Two years later, a French translation by Spaak of *Turandot* premiered at the TRM. Puccini's works hovered between the status of standard operatic repertoire and

³²Paul Spaak to Emile Jacqmain, 8 November 1924. AVB, IP II 3013.

³³“Gianni Schicchi. Opéra-bouffe en un acte de Puccini,” *L'Eventail*, 1 January 1922; Giacomo Puccini, *Lettere e rime (1884–1924): Diario Intimo di un artista*, ed. Giuseppe Adami (Naples: Pagano, 1999).

³⁴For Georges Dalman's speech about Puccini, given before the performance, see “Choses de Théâtre,” *L'Eventail*, 7 December 1924. Neither TRM's directors nor the critics for *L'Eventail* capitalized on the small part that Brussels played in Puccini's biography as a tool to market the composer's operas to the public in the seasons that followed. In fact, a short article in anticipation of the two-hundredth performance of *Madame Butterfly* at the TRM at the beginning of the 1925–26 season focused on Kufferath and Guidé's hand in bringing the opera to Brussels than on the composer's connection to the city. “Puccini et ‘Madame Butterfly,’” *L'Eventail*, 30 August 1925.

exemplars of modernism in opera, supporting both the TRM's financial needs and artistic ambitions.

***L'Eventail* and TRM Publicity**

The principal vehicle for publicity for the TRM was its weekly journal *L'Eventail*, which also served the Théâtre du Parc, and at various times the Théâtre des Invalides de la Guerre, the Concerts Chester, and the Concerts Populaires. If May de Rudder was the principal critic for chamber concerts and symphonic series, Lucien Solvay (1851–1950) was the principal critic for staged musical works for the journal throughout the 1920s and 1930s.³⁵

Solvay began his career as a journalist in 1871 for *La Gazette* in Brussels, where he reported on both politics and theater. In the introduction to his 1934 memoir, Solvay emphasized the impact of the war and his response to the post-war world:

Entre hier et aujourd'hui la guerre, l'horrible guerre, a creusé un gouffre noir où les hommes qui s'aimaient jadis se déchirent maintenant, sous prétexte de faire mutuellement leur bonheur... Au fond de ce gouffre, j'ai tâché de recueillir et de sauver, — pour ma satisfaction personnelle bien plus qu'avec la pensée que ces pages puissent être lues, — quelques débris épars de mes longues années de lutte et de travail, au temps où la Belgique, — comme la Bourgogne — était heureuse.³⁶

Like many of his contemporaries who were involved in the musical and intellectual circles in Brussels at the time, including Le Bœuf, Solvay had studied law at the ULB. At the same time, he took courses in drawing and painting at the Académie des Beaux-Arts. He then worked for the Brussels modernist journal *L'Art universel*. From 1887 until 1906, Solvay worked as the editor-in-chief of *Le Soir*. He left that position in 1906 to write for *L'Etoile belge*. During the war, the

³⁵Lucien Solvay was a cousin of Ernest Solvay, the chemist who made his fortune from his development of the process for manufacturing soda ash, and who was a well-known philanthropist. Among his philanthropic works were the creation in 1894 of the Institut des Sciences Sociales, now part of the ULB and the VUB, and the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management (also part of the ULB). His conferences on physics, beginning in 1911, brought leading scientists to Brussels, including Max Planck, Albert Einstein, and Niels Bohr.

³⁶Lucien Solvay, *Une vie de journaliste* (Brussels: Office de Publicité, 1934), 5.

Germans imprisoned Solvay. In 1924, Solvay returned to *La Gazette*. In addition to *L'Eventail*, *L'Etoile belge*, and *La Gazette*, he also contributed to *Le Guide musical*, *L'Artiste*, and *La Revue artistique* (Antwerp). A profile of Solvay in *L'Eventail* in 1922 describes his character as an ideal combination of maturity and youth (even though Solvay was in his seventies when the article appeared):

Sans doute ne fut-il jamais un 'débutant' au sens péjoratif qu'on donne à ce mot. Doué de pénétration, de clairvoyance, d'un heureux équilibre intellectuel—ce que les sots appellent une maturité précoce—il s'affirma, dès ses premiers écrits, comme un de ces esprits réfléchis et précis qui considèrent comme leur premier devoir d'élucider, en eux et autour d'eux, tout ce qui leur paraît troublé et obscur.³⁷

In addition to his writing as a critic, he also provided libretti for several Belgian composers, including Jan Blockx's *Thyl Uylenspiegel* (1900); Paul Gilson's *La Captive* (1900) and *Les deux bossus* (1910); and François Rasse's *Deïdamia* (1905). Solvay also wrote a two-volume history of the theatre, which was published in 1922 (*L'Evolution théâtrale*).³⁸

Solvay's descriptions throughout the interwar years offered the first look into new productions at the TRM, focusing particularly on the operas' plots, the TRM's staging, and general observations about the music. His synopses of the plots appeared in *L'Eventail* before the first performance of an opera during the season, and reviews of each production afterwards. Because they were in the publication of the opera house, it was rare for the reviews to be anything but laudatory. The national daily press and other art journals also published regular

³⁷"Nos Contemporains. Lucien Solvay," *L'Eventail*, 15 January 1922.

³⁸At the end of the 1924–25 season, a banquet was held at the Hôtel Métropole in honor of Solvay's fifty years as a journalist. In his address to the guests, Solvay acknowledged the respect that he had earned from artists through his critique, as was demonstrated by the many artists and musicians who attended the banquet and by their speeches. For the full text of Solvay's speech, see "Le Banquet Lucien Solvay," *L'Eventail*, 10 May 1925. During World War II, Solvay worked for the collaborationist paper *Cassandre*, edited by Paul Colin. As a result of his wartime work, the Classe des Beaux-Arts et l'Académie Royale de Belgique expelled him in May 1945. For more on Solvay, see Désiré Denuit, "Solvay, Lucien-Pierre-Auguste-Constant," *Biographie Nationale* vol. 41 (Brussels: Etablissements Emile Bruylant, 1979), 739–48.

reports on productions at the TRM. As the leading national theater, and due to its status in the history of the country, activity at the TRM was of nationwide interest. *Le Peuple*, *Le Soir*, and *L'Indépendance belge*, *Cahiers de Belgique*, *La Revue musicale de Belgique*, *La Gazette musicale belge et revue de tous les arts*, and many others printed reviews of premieres, new productions, and notable revivals. These journals, not directly associated with the opera house, tended to offer more critical assessments of the works that the TRM staged than those of Solvay in *L'Eventail*. In the most general terms however, reviews of the TRM productions in the Brussels and national press tended to conclude that even with flaws in the music or the stagings, the company offered the highest quality performances. In fact, critics writing both for *L'Eventail* and for other Belgian journals regularly attributed any shortcomings in a performance to the composers or librettists, rather than to any member of the TRM company.

The Musée de la Monnaie and the Projection of the Company's History

In addition to the process of reviving the TRM after the war, an initiative to preserve the theater's and the company's past was underway by the early 1920s. The project highlights tensions between the impulse to look to the past and anticipating the future in Brussels's musical life. As the premiere site of the city's memory—outstripping the cathedral, the royal residences, and even the monumental Hotel de Ville in the Grand'Place, it became particularly important to display the TRM's past in the post-war years. The plans for a museum dedicated to the opera house, the company, and their history confirmed the TRM as a *lieu de mémoire*, as it was a place where “a residual sense of continuity remain[ed]” after the violent interruption of the German occupation³⁹

³⁹Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” in *Rethinking the French Past*, 1.

The first steps towards creating the museum took place not at the TRM, but at the Cercle Artistique et Littéraire. In 1921, the group organized an exhibition exploring the TRM's history through a collection of paintings, prints, caricatures, scores, and programs.⁴⁰ In 1925, a scheme to establish a permanent museum of the TRM emerged. It was to serve a very different purpose than the exhibitions of model sets and costume designs that were put on display in the TRM's foyer in anticipation of new productions.⁴¹ It looked toward the past and was intended to celebrate the triumphs of the opera house, while these small exhibitions focused on the activity in the opera house of the present. The items from the Cercle Artistique et Littéraire exhibition formed the core of the new museum's collection, which would be both an archive and the source for public exhibitions.⁴²

In late March 1925, the Société du Musée was formed. This *association sans but lucratif (asbl)* brought together members of the intellectual elite in Brussels, including Nelson Lekime (the curator of the new museum), costume designer James Thiriar, music critic Ernest Closson, Henry Le Bœuf, Buffin, and Victor Reding (editor of *L'Eventail* and director of the Théâtre du Parc).⁴³ The list of committee members shows that the same people who were invested in the organization of performances of new music were also involved in protecting the traditions that defined Brussels's musical culture. The city considered housing the new museum in the Maison du Roi at the Grand'Place, as well as displaying some pieces from the collection in the halls of

⁴⁰Nelson Lekime reported four years later that the ten-day exhibit had had at least eight thousand visitors. Nelson Lekime, "Le Musée du Théâtre de la Monnaie," *L'Eventail*, 16 August 1925.

⁴¹For more on this practice, see Jacqueline Guisset, "Décors et Costumes entre 1910 et 1940: Jean Delescluze, James Thiriar et leurs successeurs," in *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 315–41.

⁴²"Notes de théâtre," *L'Eventail*, 22 February 1925.

⁴³"Notes de théâtre," *L'Eventail*, 5 April 1925.

the TRM: “De cette façon, le public dilettante serait mis perpétuellement à même d’étudier les fastes de notre théâtre dont l’histoire, de 1700, date de sa fondation par le prince électeur Maximilien-Emmanuel de Bavière, à nos jours, se confond avec l’histoire du théâtre et de la musique en Europe.”⁴⁴ As plans for the museum moved ahead, *L’Eventail* linked it to Kufferath and his contemporaries, reporting that as early as 1912, a Comité Amis du Théâtre had been formed to consider the possibilities of creating a museum, but that the committee disappeared with the beginning of the war.⁴⁵ The link to Kufferath and Guidé suggested that the lionized directors kept the importance of the company’s past in mind even as they shaped the TRM’s legacy for their successors. By the beginning of the 1925–26 season, an exhibition was in place in the TRM building. *L’Eventail* periodically published lists of the donations that poured in for the new museum. In his descriptions of these new acquisitions, Lekime took the opportunity to offer readers anecdotes about the theater’s past.⁴⁶ These reports also highlighted the importance that two specific episodes in the TRM’s history took above all others. Although there are reports of donations of lithographs and other documents pertaining to the TRM before 1830, most of the items that Lekime described in these reports pertain either to the events around 1830 or the period between 1870 and 1914, when the TRM was a center for Wagnerian productions.

The Problem of an Outdated Genre

The revival of the grand prewar five-act productions as the basis of each season’s program at the TRM throughout the interwar period presented a different, but related celebration of the past to

⁴⁴Nelson Lekime, “Actualités. Le Musée du Théâtre de la Monnaie,” *L’Eventail*, 16 August 1925.

⁴⁵Nelson Lekime, “Actualités. Le Musée du Théâtre de la Monnaie,” *L’Eventail*, 16 August 1925.

⁴⁶See, for instance, Nelson Lekime, “Le Musée de la Monnaie,” *L’Eventail*, 8 November 1925.

that of the Musée de la Monnaie. In the post-World War I world, many composers and critics dismissed opera as an outdated genre. With the collapsing status of opera, the TRM struggled to keep its work relevant to Belgian culture of the present, it made sense to look to its pre-war glory. The stances that critics and audiences (as critics described them) project two different attitudes toward the music of the past, and the TRM had to negotiate between these two: on the one hand, opera was an outmoded genre. Nineteenth-century opera especially, had little to do with the post-World War I world. On the other hand, the standard repertoire of the nineteenth century was a body of works that the younger generations had not had the chance to learn, and were therefore fresh and new to them, and still reminded older generations of the glorious pre-war past.

In 1930, Belgian critic André Cœuroy, joined the chorus of European composers, including Milhaud, Hindemith, and Kurt Weill, who declared opera to be outdated:

L'opéra, le grand opéra (ce que le jargon des critiques appelle 'la grande machine') est aujourd'hui moribond. Nul artiste créateur ne peut plus souffrir ses conventions visuelles, les poses de ses ténors rondouillets, les mines de ses cantatrices adipeuses, les gueules de ses choristes couperosées, les anémies de ses décors papelards.⁴⁷

Cœuroy proposed radio opera as an alternative. Although only a few of the new productions at the TRM featured the traditional five-act grand opera, standard repertoire had a special place at the TRM that was tied up pride in the institutional history that contributed to the construction of the Belgian nation. Lawrence D. Kritzman emphasizes the importance of nostalgia in the concept of nationhood. He writes: "In a way, one might argue that the quest for memory in the contemporary world is nothing more than an attempt to master the perceived loss of one's

⁴⁷*Le Panorama de la Radio*, quoted in E. Closson, "Le Panorama de la Radio," *L'Indépendance belge*, 19 November 1930.

history.”⁴⁸ For the TRM, revisiting the key moments in the company’s and the nation’s history as a way to capture and structure the past was an important part of the programming for special occasions.

The nostalgia for the past, and the reinscription of the TRM’s role in the construction of the nation lay particularly in the same two memories of the TRM that were vital to the Musée de la Monnaie’s collection: the 1830 production of *La Muette de Portici* and the company’s successes as a center for Wagnerian productions. Both of these continue to at the heart of the conception of the TRM even today (as the gentleman on the tram in 2012 demonstrated). For events of major national importance throughout the interwar years, starting with its grand reopening in December 1918, the TRM revived *La Muette de Portici* as a reminder of the Belgian national spirit and the myth of the revolution. In 1930, the TRM began the season with *La Muette de Portici*, as celebration of the centenary of the nation and the company’s role in it. *L’Eventail* offered a front-page story about the opera’s place in Belgian history in the days leading up to the first performance of the season, reinforcing the link between the opera and the Belgian Revolution.⁴⁹

In addition to this particularly symbolic work that carried with it the weight of the memory of the TRM’s past, the company also regularly staged standard nineteenth-century works that had a less direct connection to the construction and memory of Belgian national

⁴⁸Lawrence D. Kritzman, “In Remembrance of Things French,” Forward to *Rethinking the French Past: Realms of Memory*, Vol. 1 *Conflicts and Divisions*, ed. Pierre Nora, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996), xiii. Another very different form of nostalgia for Belgium’s past was the musicologist Charles Van den Borren’s construction of a pre-1830 Belgium, based on his examination of geographical and stylistic relationships among fifteenth- and sixteenth-century composers, and grounded in Henri Pirenne’s multivolume history of Belgium.

⁴⁹A. Boghaert-Vaché, “1830: La Revolution au théâtre,” *L’Eventail*, 24 August 1930. Lucien Solvay declared: “Cette représentation de *la Muette* a été [...] une des expressions les plus éclatantes de nos fêtes centennales. On pourrait dire même qu’elle fut, de toutes, la plus significative.” “Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. Les Premières. *La Muette de Portici*, *Milenka*,” *L’Eventail*, 30 August 1930.

identity. The staples of TRM's seasons (August through June) tended to be drawn from standard repertoire. Lucien Solvay conceived of the theater's reconstituted role in Brussels as one that was even more complex than it was before 1914. The old repertoire was crucial to this role, as he conceived of it. In an essay on the TRM after the war, Solvay challenged the common perception of the post-war years being completely separated by the pre-war years:

Avant 1914, c'est de l'histoire très ancienne, c'est le passé lointain, le rêve, le paradis perdu, les illusions mortes... Depuis le 11 novembre 1918, c'est la réalité.

Cette réalité a nécessairement conservé quelques traits du rêve évanoui. Elle est faite parfois de ses débris épars, soigneusement reconstitués et réadaptés aux conditions nouvelles de l'existence. En certains domaines, elle a même avec le passé d'heureuses ressemblances; elle s'est attachée à le continuer, afin de nous faire croire que rien n'est changé en somme de ce que nous aimions autrefois...

C'est un peu l'impression que nous donne, depuis que 'le Jour de gloire est arrivé', la vie des théâtres, et, tout spécialement, la vie du théâtre de la Monnaie. Rien n'y est véritablement changé, tout au moins en ce qui concerne son activité artistique.

According to Solvay, part of the TRM's post-war responsibility was to educate younger generations who did not know the standard works of the pre-war era because of the interruption caused by the German occupation:

Depuis la guerre, une génération nouvelle est, en quelque sorte, née à la vie artistique, une génération qui ne connaissait guère, ou qu'incomplètement, ce qui existait avant elle, ce qui nous était familier, mais ce qu'il lui importe de connaître à son tour. Les œuvres qu'elle ignorait, on les lui a montrées; on est en train de l'instruire, de la documenter.

But, Solvay continued, the older generation also had a responsibility to stay current on new music and the evolution of musical style and thought.⁵⁰ This explanation of the TRM's programming described the company's mission in terms of education, echoing those of *Le Bœuf* at the Concerts Populaires. In 1922, *L'Eventail* framed the first two months of the season (August and September) as geared toward an opera-going public that was different from that of the rest of the year:

⁵⁰Lucien Solvay, "Le Théâtre de la Monnaie depuis l'Armistice," *L'Eventail*, 21 December 1924.

De nouvelles générations ont succédé aux anciennes. Les gens qui remplissent les salles de spectacle ont moins de préjugés; ils arrivent là avec des impressions toutes neuves; ils sont avides de voir et d'entendre des œuvres célèbres, qu'ils ignorent encore... Et voilà pourquoi le succès de *Faust*, de *Carmen*, de *la Traviata*, de *Manon*, d'*Aïda*, est intarissable.⁵¹

The emphasis on the special character of the audience early in the season appeared again the following August in *L'Eventail*: “Une salle archibondée, du haut en bas, à toutes les places. Et quel public! Curieux, ardent, enthousiaste. Des étrangers et de la jeunesse surtout, — toute une génération avide de connaître des œuvres célèbres, dont on lui parla bien des fois et qui vont lui être révélées!”⁵² By advertising old favorites as fresh works for a new generation, this article described the TRM's mission as one that served all generations and the interests of composers and audiences alike.

The productions early in the season also served as the platform for debuts of new singers who had joined the company for the season. Mary Soyer, for instance, appeared for the first times at the TRM as Maguerite in *Faust* and Micaëla in *Carmen* in the same week at the beginning of the 1922–23 season.⁵³ The post-war TRM preserved its system of relying principally on an ensemble of singers who performed in all genres, from grand opera to operetta, precluding the tradition of official “debuts” of most singers at the TRM.⁵⁴ The press, however, often wrote of the first three performances of a new member of the troupe in these terms, and often highlighted a singer's return to the troupe after an absence or a singer's departure from the

⁵¹“Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. La Reouverture,” *L'Eventail*, 6 August 1922.

⁵²“Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. La réouverture. Mignon.—Lakmé.—Faust,” *L'Eventail*, 5 August 1923.

⁵³“Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. La Reouverture,” *L'Eventail*, 6 August 1922.

⁵⁴This organization, Lemmers shows, ensured that the company could stage a variety of standard operas over the course of the season at low cost, ensuring financial survival of the theater. For more detail on the structure of the singers' contracts see Lemmers, “La logique de troupe,” 94–8. Contracts for members of the company, including singers and members of the corps de ballet, are preserved in IP-3028, AVB.

TRM. These events, though not an official part of the company's structure, provided reporters with another angle from which to write reports about the company's standard repertoire.⁵⁵ As vehicles for education and singer debuts, these operas formed an essential art of the TRM as a vibrant artistic institution. In material terms, the logic of programming each season required productions of audience favorites from the nineteenth century to offset costs of new works, which proved to be expensive to stage given the costs of new sets, royalties, and rehearsals, and rarely guaranteed a profit at the box office.

Building a Belgian Repertoire?

Under the *cahier des charges*, the directors of the TRM were required to produce at least three new works (a minimum of nine acts) each season. The wording of the company's statutes only reserves the right to require a new Belgian work in the season: "Le Collège se réserve le droit de décider que parmi les neuf actes, trois actes au moins seront d'un musicien belge, vivant, ou mort depuis moins de cinq ans."⁵⁶ Despite the soft wording of this stipulation, a separate fund was earmarked to cover some of the costs of producing new Belgian works under this article. In the period between 1918 and 1928, the TRM staged at least one unpublished Belgian opera each season. Each work, however, only appeared on one or two seasons, and few became part of regular repertoire of the company. Valérie Dufour points out that the "Belgian" quality of works "est mentionnée comme une curiosité, une chose incongrue et dissimule à peine l'*a priori* négatif d'une musique nécessairement moins intéressante."⁵⁷ These operas were treated as separate from

⁵⁵Lemmers, "La logique de troupe," 77–78.

⁵⁶*Bulletin communal*, 1920, 227, quoted in Valérie Dufour, "Grandeurs et misères des compositeurs belges à l'opéra," in *La Monnaie entre-deux-geures*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 219.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 235.

both the standard nineteenth-century fare that kept the company's finances stable and the new productions of recently-composed operas by foreigners. The grouping of all new opera under a single article in the *cahier des charges* obscures the different functions of the new Belgian and foreign works. Although recently composed, many of these Belgian works adhered to the stylistic traditions of late nineteenth-century French composition and therefore did not contribute to the narrative of the TRM as a center for new musical styles. Instead they contributed to a sense of a strong national identity (along the lines of Paul La Gye's vision for his proposed directorship).

The Belgian operas as a body of work, by Walloons and Flemings, served two principle functions that were closely tied up with the vision of the TRM as the *première scène lyrique* in Belgium: first, as part of the same patriotic impulse that inspired the many revivals of *La Muette de Portici*, some Belgian works were clearly chosen or interpreted as expressions of Belgian national pride as it was shaped by World War I. Second, they were presented as potentially becoming part of a standard repertoire of Belgian opera.⁵⁸ New operas by foreign composers could not serve these purposes.

The Collège des Echevins, not the directors of the TRM, appointed a "comité de l'art dramatique et musical," to choose a work by a Belgian composer each year.⁵⁹ The committee was made up of Belgians who had a specific stake in the TRM's national and international identity. Lucien Solvay served as president from 1919 until 1924. Edmond Glesener, the writer

⁵⁸Belgian composers who wrote operas after World War I were steeped in nineteenth-century tradition, while more experimental composers concentrated on chamber and orchestral genres. Dufour, "Grandeurs et misères," 217. See also Valérie Dufour, "'Tranquil Independence': National Identity and Musical Modernity in Belgium between the Wars," in *From Art Nouveau to Surrealism: Belgian Modernity in the Making*, ed. Nathalie Aubert, Pierre-Philippe Fraiture, and Patrick McGuinness (London: Legenda, 2007), 152–60.

⁵⁹Dufour shows that the TRM administration did enjoy some power of refusal once the committee had made its recommendation. For example, the committee chose Albert Dupuis's *Édénie* in 1924, but it was never performed at the TRM. "Grandeurs et misères," 220.

and minister of sciences and fine arts in Brussels, succeeded him.⁶⁰ The 1920 committee also included music critic and composer Georges Systemans, composers Joseph Jongen, Karel Mestdagh, and Léon Du Bois.⁶¹ The makeup of the committee and its choices for the TRM's Belgian productions exposed it to (not unfounded) accusations of snobism and favoritism. Dufour, gleaned evidence from Lucien Solvay's correspondence, concludes: "Il semble donc, que, sur le plan esthétique, le comité avait l'ambition d'inscrire ses choix dans une veine, sinon moderniste, en tout cas ouverte au dépassement de la toute-puissance de la mélodie et de l'expression des sentiments."⁶² Personal connections to the TRM drove the committee's choices as well. Albert Dupuis, for example, had connections to Maurice Bastin (1884–1983), who was the "premier chef d'orchestre" at the TRM from 1919 until 1940. Bastin's father, who was the president of l'Emulation, a musical society in Verviers, funded Dupuis's study at the Schola in Paris.⁶³

The group of composers whose works appeared at the TRM in the 1920s was a very different one from the group that came into direct conflict with Paul Collaer and the Concerts Pro Arte in the same period (see chapter 2). Francophone Belgian composers shared connections to Vincent d'Indy and to the Schola Cantorum in Paris. Brumagne, Dupuis, Vreuls, and Marsick all studied composition with him at the Schola, and Vreuls and Marsick went on to use the Schola's

⁶⁰Ibid. For more on Glesener, see Arsène Soreil, "Glesener, Edmond-Laurient-Guillaume," *Biographie Nationale* vol. 39 (Brussels: Établissements Émile Bruylant, 1976), 438–41.

⁶¹Dufour, "Grandeurs et misères," 222, 241n12.

⁶²Ibid., 222.

⁶³Ibid., 222, 241n18; Valérie Dufour, "Léon Molle et Maurice Bastin, chefs permanents à la Monnaie. Notes biographiques," in *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 365. Maurice Bastin also studied at the Schola in the 1890s. His teachers there included Pierre de Bréville, d'Indy, and Albéniz.

methods in Luxembourg and Athens. Furthermore, Bastin had also studied at the Schola.⁶⁴ The Flemish composers were steeped in the Wagnerian tradition, either through studies in Germany or through their connections with such nineteenth-century Flemish composers as Peter Benoit. The result of the committee's choices was a very narrow view of the Belgian operatic repertoire.

If the goal of the requirement for at least one unpublished Belgian opera each season in the *cahier des charges* was to stimulate Belgian composition and create a specifically Belgian repertoire of operas, it was only partially successful. The TRM rarely revived the productions, and although other theaters in Belgium sometimes adopted them into their repertoire, companies abroad seldom staged them. As a group, however, these works and their reception reveal how the TRM positioned itself as an explicitly national and patriotic organization. In the first post-war seasons, the Belgian productions drew overt connections to the post-war identity that Belgium constructed for itself. Operas chosen later in the 1920s were also connected by thematic elements in their libretti—particularly the valorization of home – that extend the view of a united Belgium.

In a shrewd patriotic move, the first new post-war production at the TRM was a double bill featuring two newly composed operas by Belgian composers celebrating the nation's wartime and post-war identity as “gallant little Belgium”: Léon Dubois's *Vers La Gloire*, and François Rasse's *1914. 1914* (text by Belgian playwright and founder of *Pourquoi Pas?*, Georges Garnir and music by François Rasse), a two-act opera, follows a reluctant Alsatian soldier in the German army from rural Hainaut to the wards of an asylum that cares for victims of German violence. *Vers la Gloire* (text also by Garnir and music by Léon Dubois), an opera in five tableaux, depicts scenes throughout Belgium at the moment of the armistice.⁶⁵ Queen

⁶⁴Dufour, “Grandeurs et misères,” 218.

⁶⁵The libretto of *1914* is reproduced at http://archive.org/stream/milleneufcentqua00garn/milleneufcentqua00garn_djvu.txt (accessed 16 October 2013). See also Valérie Dufour, “Grandeurs et misères,” 224–25.

Elisabeth and Prince Léopold attended the third performance. In *L'Eventail's* review of the evening, their arrival and departure were described as part of the spectacle and symbolism of the evening:

La salle debout, agitant des mouchoirs, a crié “Vive le roi! Vive la Reine! Vive le Prince! Vive la Belgique!” et cette oraison a duré plusieurs minutes qui furent impressionnantes.

Tous les regards étaient tournés vers la loge royale, d'où la Reine et le Prince saluaient la foule enflammée.

Il y a eu là une manifestation patriotique émouvant et qui se renouvela dans la rue, au départ des spectateurs princiers.⁶⁶

The queen and the prince represented the nation's present and the future. Under Albert I and Elisabeth, the monarchy led Belgium into the post-war world. Elisabeth and Léopold's presence, therefore, at an evening of performances of works that touted nationalism, affirmed the importance of the Belgian characteristics of loyalty, ingenuity, and resilience that are woven into the works of Garnir, Rasse, and Dubois. The TRM staged the patriotic program a total of five times in the spring of 1919, but neither work reappeared in later seasons.

Four years later, the TRM and the committee were still capitalizing on post-war sentiment in Belgium. Albert Dupuis's *La Victoire* (with a libretto by Louis Payen) had its premiere on 28 March 1923.⁶⁷ With staging by Dalman, costumes by Thiriard, sets by Delescluze, and with Laure Bergé, one of the TRM's star sopranos, in the lead role, the opera received a warm response from the public. Lucien Solvay, who was on the committee that selected the work, declared: “Ça été vraiment une ‘victoire’.”⁶⁸ Valérie Dufour suggests that despite the neoclassical subject of the work, the title alone appealed to the TRM, “pour servir une fois de

⁶⁶“Mondanités,” *L'Eventail*, 13 April 1919.

⁶⁷Payen's play first appeared in Brussels at the Théâtre des Galeries in 1911, with incidental music by Henri Cain.

⁶⁸Lucien Solvay, “Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. La Victoire,” *L'Eventail*, 1 April 1923. As with the earlier production of *1914* and *Vers la Gloire*, *La Victoire* did not appear on the TRM's program after its six performances in the spring of 1923.

plus le sentiment national et le cinquième anniversaire de l’armistice de 1918.”⁶⁹ Furthermore, Solvay hailed Albert Dupuis’s status as a master, comparing *La Victoire* to the composer’s *Jean-Michel*, staged at the TRM twenty years earlier. Solvay declared that Dupuis was no longer the debutant that Brussels knew in the pre-war period.⁷⁰ Dupuis’s music had become a symbol of the Belgian compositional style.

Not all new Belgian works had explicit ties to such timely nationalist sentiment. In fact, most of the Belgian works that were presented in fulfillment of the *cahier des charges* between 1918 and 1928 had been composed, and even produced at the TRM, before the war. The theme of homecoming—both of the composers themselves and of the characters in the operas—emerged repeatedly in this repertoire. It projected the necessity of protecting and preserving home in the broadest sense.⁷¹

Jan Blockx (1851–1912) proved to be the representative composer of Flemish music at the TRM.⁷² On 12 November 1920, Ruhlmann conducted a revised version of the composer’s *Thyl Uylenspiegel*, based on Charles de Coster’s 1867 novel. The first version was staged in Brussels in 1900—the first year of Kufferath and Guidé’s term as directors. Henri Cain and Jacques Heugel (publisher and director of *Le Ménestrel*) both urged Blockx to write music with a

⁶⁹Dufour, “Grandeurs et misères,” 228–29.

⁷⁰Lucien Solvay, “Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. La Victoire,” *L’Eventail*, 25 March 1923.

⁷¹The impulses to represent at once the value of a Belgian homeland and the regional flavors of the Flemish and Walloon versions of home are very similar to the regional and national dynamics in France before World War I that Katharine Ellis discusses in relation to Gounod’s *Mireille* in “*Mireille*’s Homecoming? Gounod, Mistral, and the Midi,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 65, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 463–509.

⁷²A student of Peter Benoit at the Vlaamsche Muziekschool in Antwerp, Blockx later studied in Leipzig, where he was a student in Reinecke’s class at the conservatory and where he came in contact with Edvard Grieg and Christian Sinding. Upon his return to Belgium, he was appointed to a professorship at the Vlaamsche Muziekschool, where he taught Lodewijk Mortelmans and Flor Alpaerts. He became the director of the royal conservatory in Antwerp in 1901.

Flemish flavor.⁷³ In a review of the production at the TRM in 1900, *L'Etoile belge* reflected on the effect of Blockx's work, which was premiered in its French and Flemish versions within days of each other: "Voici bien, en français, une œuvre profondément flamande. [...] Ne serait-ce pas la solution des querelles soulevées en ce pays bilingue: pensez d'abord en patriote et parlez comme vous voulez, comme vous pouvez, comme votre intérêt commande."⁷⁴ The political flavor of this review reflects the moderate political solution of promoting a culturally diverse but politically unified nation. Solvay's evaluation of the work as a symbolic solution to Belgium's deep cultural divide may have informed the choice to revive the work as the nation was rebuilding and grappling with long-standing conflicts. The production had six performances in November and December of 1920.

In 1923, the TRM staged Blockx's first opera, *Herbergprinses* (in French translation by G. Lagye as *Princesse d'Auberge*). The opera had its premiere in 1896, with a French-language premiere at the TRM following closely thereafter. In 1923, *L'Eventail* hailed the work as "une Carmen brabançonne," comparing the plot and the local character to that of Bizet's popular opera.⁷⁵ The dramatic effect of the music, the critic continued, outstripped operas written in the post-war period. Its expression, "souffle dramatique," diversity of melodic character, and candor made the work part of the late nineteenth-century tradition in opera at the post-war TRM. The production was staged seventeen times in the 1923–24 season. Blockx's music appeared on the

⁷³For more on the composition of *Thyl Uylenspiegel*, see Jan Dewilde, "De Aan- en afwezigheid van Vlaamse opera componisten in de Muntchouwburg tijdens het interbellum," in *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 188–94.

⁷⁴"A la Monnaie. *Thyl Uylenspiegel*," *L'Etoile belge*, 20 January 1900. Quoted in an Dewilde, "Vlaamse opera componisten in de Muntchouwburg," 190.

⁷⁵"Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. *Princesse d'auberge*," *L'Eventail*, 7 October 1923. The review summarizes Blockx's opera in terms that parallel the reception of *Carmen*: a woman leads a noble man to jealousy and suffers a tragic death against a picturesque musical background.

TRM stage again for the 1925–26 season, with a revival of his 1901 opera *La Fiancée de la Mer* (in translation by Lagye), for which Blockx once again received praise for his operatic style.⁷⁶

Baron Victor Buffin de Chosal's opera *Kaatje*, also on a Flemish subject, which premiered at the TRM in 1913, reentered the TRM's repertoire for the 1921–22 season in a revised version, which the composer had produced upon Kufferath's request.⁷⁷ Kufferath's legacy was tightly tied up with the revival of the opera. *L'Eventail's* article on the 1921 production celebrated Kufferath's hand in the revisions, depicting the former director as a model of taste and as a trusted adviser to Buffin: "*Kaatje*, améliorée, va reparaître vendredi prochain sur la scène de la Monnaie, où l'éminent directeur se disposait à la faire revivre lorsque la mort vient le surprendre."⁷⁸ The explicitly nationalist opera, which celebrated the charms of the lowlands over those of Italy, carried the message, delivered by the title character to her cousin, "qu'un véritable artiste ne doit pas chercher cet idéal autre part qu'en soi-même et dans le décor familial de son pays natal."⁷⁹

If Blockx was the represented of Flemish sensibilities in music, Victor Vreuls (1876–1944) was his Walloon counterpart.⁸⁰ His *Olivier le Simple*, with a libretto by Belgian Jules Delacre, emphasized themes of travel abroad and a sense of home from a Walloon perspective. Solvay drew a direct comparison between the very similar stories of *Olivier* and *Kaatje*: the hero

⁷⁶"Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. Reprise de 'La Fiancée de la Mer'," *L'Eventail*, 1 October 1925.

⁷⁷Buffin studied composition with Jongen, and also served on the Commission de Surveillance of the Conservatoire (along with Henry Le Bœuf). *Kaatje* was performed ten times between November 1921 and March 1922. John Scott Whiteley, *Joseph Jongen and his Organ Music* (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1997), 53.

⁷⁸"Théâtre de la Monnaie. *Kaatje* et *La Servante Maîtresse*," *L'Eventail*, 30 October 1921.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Vreuls studied at the Ecole de Musique in Verviers, the Conservatoire in Liège, and finally at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, where he worked with d'Indy. He was then appointed director of the Conservatoire de Luxembourg in 1906.

going abroad, drawn by the romance of the unknown, leaving behind true love and the safety of home, and ultimately faced with the tension between the allure of the foreign and the safety of the familiar:

Vous souvenez-vous de la tendre éloquence que mettait naguère la jolie Kaatje à nous montrer, elle, la folie des aventures en lointain pays, et combien plus puissant, plus délicieux, plus sûr est le foyer patrial, sous le ciel béni où l'on est né, dans le chaud rayonnement de la patrie? L'étrangère, alors, s'en retournait seule, vers les régions d'où elle était venue et c'était la douce fiancée qui était victorieuse et à qui allaient toute notre sympathie et toute notre émotion... Qui des deux héroïnes, si semblables dans leur opposition même, pour la recherche de l'oiseau bleu, a raison? L'une et l'autre, sans doute... Les deux poètes, en défendant les thèses contraires (si tant qu'on puisse appeler de ce vilain mot des créations de l'esprit où la rhétorique n'a rien à voir), nous ont convaincus, chacun de son côté... En écoutant M. Delacre, il n'est personne de nous, j'imagine, qui ne dise:— 'Il faut partir!' Et que ce sera le tour de M. Spaak, nous dirons tous: —'Restons!'⁸¹

The TRM scheduled seven performances of *Olivier* for the spring of 1922, and the directors commissioned a second opera from Vreuls—*Songe de nuit d'été*, with a libretto by Spaak. They manipulated the system in order to defray the costs of the new production by securing funding from the committee for the 1925–26 production after they had commissioned the work.⁸²

For the 1924–25 season, the committee decided unanimously to forego the production of a new Belgian work. The directors of the TRM, *L'Eventail* reported, claimed that even if there were no *new* Belgian works worthy of the TRM's attentions, there were older Belgian works of value, including Jean Van den Eeden's *Rhena*, which was their choice for the TRM.⁸³ Van den Eeden (1842–1917), was a Flemish composer born in Ghent, made his name as a composer of vocal music.⁸⁴ The composer completed *Rhena*, his second opera, in 1904. Its premiere,

⁸¹Lucien Solvay, "Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. Olivier le Simple," *L'Eventail*, 12 March 1922.

⁸²Valérie Dufour, "Grandeurs et misères," 221

⁸³"Choses de théâtre," *L'Eventail*, 31 August 1924.

⁸⁴André Fraikin describes Van den Eeden as "pour la musique belge du XIX^e siècle, le maître incontesté de la cantate et de l'oratorio." In 1969, Van den Eeden won the Belgian Grand Prix de Rome for *Faust's laatste Nacht*.

conducted by de Thoran, took place on 15 February 1912 to favorable reviews. It was revived the following season. Although A.D., writing for *Le Soir*, celebrated Van den Eeden's opera, he also noted the apparent lack of official support for the Belgian work (despite the enthusiasm of the audiences) by indicating that the boxes at the TRM reserved for members of the Collège des Echevins and the royal family were empty.⁸⁵ The production returned to the TRM stage for the 1930–31 season.

For the 1927–28 season, the new Belgian work selected was Armand Marsick's *L'Anneau nuptial*, which had been written between 1915 and 1924. Marsick (1877–1959) had just returned to Belgium after many years abroad, first as a student in Nancy under Guy Ropartz, then as the conductor of the Concerts Colonne and student of d'Indy, professor of composition at the Athens Conservatory, and finally director of the Bilbao Conservatory. In 1927, he accepted a position as professor of harmony at the Conservatoire Royal de Liège.⁸⁶ Originally written in Italian, the French translation of the work was undertaken by Paola Marsick-Sampieri in 1924.⁸⁷ The work is in the tradition of d'Indy, but also shows some influence of Italian verism. Solvay, however, wrote of the work's style:

Les gens à la page estimeront peut-être que l'œuvre est trop claire, trop chantante, c'est-à-dire pas assez moderne, polytonale ou atonale—Dieu soit loué!—et même très peu

Van den Eeden actively promoted Flemish music and founded with Peter Benoit and Leo Van Gheluwe, a society for the promotion of music from Flanders. From 1878 until his death, Van den Eeden served as director of the Académie de Musique de Mons. André Fraikin, "Jean-Baptiste Van den Eeden," *Biographie Nationale* vol. 44 (Brussels: Établissements Émile Bruylant, 1985), 429–43.

⁸⁵ A.D., "A la Monnaie. Rhena," *Le Soir*, 9 February 1925.

⁸⁶For more on Marsick's biography, see Y. Gobert, "Armand Marsick, 1877-1959. Biographie, Catalogue, Analyses," mémoire de licence, Université Catholique de Louvain, 1974; Paul Gilson, "Armand Marsick," in *Les compositeurs belges* (Brussels: INR, 1936).

⁸⁷Dufour cites a letter from Ugo Fleres to Marsick-Sampieri, dated 15 October 1924 ("Grandeurs et misères," 233).

thématique, mais elle a le rare mérite d'être vivante et expressive, sans grande originalité, mais sans banalité. Encore que belge, elle a remporté un vif succès.⁸⁸

In this instance, the tame “Belgian” sound, rooted in the nineteenth century, was a welcome change in Solvay’s eyes after the productions of Arthur Honegger’s *Antigone* and Darius Milhaud’s *Le Pauvre matelot* in February and March of the same season. The opera had seven performances at the end of the 1927–28 season, but never appeared on the TRM’s program again.

Other Belgian operas composed before the war that the TRM staged included De Boeck’s 1902 *Winternachtsdroom* (presented in French translation by Victor Lagye as *Songe d’une nuit d’hiver*)⁸⁹ and Samuel-Hoelman’s 1890 *La jeune fille à la fenêtre*.⁹⁰ Although productions of operas by Belgian composers generally did not appear in the programs for multiple seasons, several ballets by Belgian composers proved to be mainstays of the TRM’s repertoire. Georges Lauwryns and François Ambrosiny’s ballet *Hapjes et Hapjes*, for instance, was paired regularly with standard French and Italian fare. Between 1922 and 1928, the ballet was staged more than fifty times. The ballet’s premiere took place in 1910. Set in Delft, it features a cast of characters

⁸⁸Lucien Solvay, “A la Monnaie. *L’anneau nuptial*,” *La Gazette*, 4 March 1928. Quoted in Dufour, “Grandeurs et misères,” 234.

⁸⁹The Opéra-Comique in Paris showed interest in producing a French translation of this opera, but it was the Théâtre Graslin in Nancy that staged the French premiere, in 1911. In 1918, the French version appeared in Brussels at the Théâtre de la Bourse. The premiere of the work at the TRM took place five years later, in December 1923. Jan Dewilde, “Vlaamse opera componisten in de Muntshouwborg,” 194–96. De Boeck’s *La Route d’Emeraude* (composed after the war) made its Monnaie premiere in November 1926, and was revived for the 1931–32 and 1938–39 seasons.

⁹⁰The chamber opera for mezzo soprano, oboe, harp, and quartet, first appeared at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris in 1914 and had already been programmed at Brussels’s Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier, sung by Jane Bathori. The TRM premiere took place on 14 February 1927. It was revived for the 1928–29 season. Valérie Dufour, “Grandeurs et misères,” 236.

that includes a Dutch princess and an American girl.⁹¹ *Danses wallonnes*, another ballet was repeated often between 1926 and 1930.

The Taste for Exoticism and New Operas by Foreign Composers at the TRM

If the new Belgian operas at the TRM offered views of home, a large proportion of the remaining programming was dedicated to operas by foreign composers depicting exotic locations ranging from Africa (Henri Rabaud's *Marouf, savetier du Caire*), to Russia (works by Alexander Borodin, Modest Mussorgsky and Sergey Prokofiev), and even to Germany (Franz Schubert's *Fierabras*). These "exotic" works were products of nineteenth-century operatic tradition, but appealed to modernist taste for the unfamiliar and the tendency to equate exotic sounds and subjects with timelessness.⁹² Such a combination fit the TRM's orientation toward both its successes in the past and its reputation for programming contemporary pieces. Furthermore, many productions of works with an exotic flavor were presented explicitly in the press—particularly in *L'Eventail*—as fulfillments of Kufferath's plans for the TRM, cut off first by the war, then by his death.

In the spring of 1919, Kufferath and his team of directors revisited their project to stage Henri Rabaud's *Marouf, savetier du Caire*. The opera's TRM premiere had originally been scheduled for the 1914–15 season. Based on a story from the *Thousand and One Nights*, Rabaud's opera uses many familiar tropes of nineteenth-century opera to create the impression of a world removed from that of Western Europe.⁹³ Although Rabaud's opera did not appeal to

⁹¹"Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. La 75e représentation de 'Hopjes et Hopjes'," *L'Eventail*, 5 November 1922.

⁹²See Anthony Sheppard, *Revealing Masks: Exotic Influences and Ritualized Performance in Modernist Music Theater* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 11–14. The taste for exotic primitivism in music was not limited to staged productions. For more on this, see my discussion of Prokofiev's *Suite Scythe* in chapter 1.

⁹³In "Doing the Impossible: On the Musically Exotic" (*Journal of Musicological Research* 27, no. 4 [2008]: 334–58) and *Musical Exoticism: Images and Reflections* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), Ralph P. Locke

critics outside of Europe, in Belgium, it was welcomed as an escape from the aftermath of World War I and as one of the first signs of the TRM's resurrection. Lawrence Gilman, writing of the work's Metropolitan Opera debut in 1918 complained of Rabaud: "It would be hard, indeed, to think of any composer now writing who is less adapted to comport himself comfortably in the East of the *Thousand and One Nights* [...]. One of the many "hangers-on in the banquet-hall of a genius [Debussy]," Rabaud, Gilman wrote, was too cerebral and his music a poor substitute for that of Debussy, Wagner, Ravel, or Stravinsky. Of the opera itself:

Here is a wing from M. Dukas' plate, here a feather from Stravinsky's Bird of Fire; and here is a bit of Mélisande's heart. And of course, this being an *Arabian Nights* opera, we get also much second-hand exoticism—the conventionally Eastern flavors and spices that every competent tonal chef keeps in stock on his shelves: the characteristic scales and intervals and rhythms and instrumental garnishings that are to found on the shelf marked "Local Color," in the jar labeled "Oriental."⁹⁴

In Belgium, however, the spectacle of the sets, designed by Delescluze, and the music, were celebrated. Jacqueline Guisset describes the effect of the work in the post-war context as a form of escapism, both temporal and geographical.⁹⁵ *Le Soir*, for instance, declared of the score:

"Moderne, elle l'est assurément, elle l'est dans la meilleure acception du terme, mais elle dissimule sa science sous les flots de son inspiration. On ne songe pas au métier en subissant la séduction de ces rythmes charmants."⁹⁶ By contrast, Le Bœuf, writing as Henry Lesbroussart for

argues for a broader study of musical exoticism, beyond passages that "sound exotic." This argument is the core of Locke's investigation into exoticism in music from 1700 through the twentieth century. At the TRM immediately after the war, however, critics and audiences alike were particularly caught up in the trend of discussing only the sections that used specific techniques to signal the music of another culture—especially in large crowd scenes and ballets. Locke delves into the ramifications of what he calls the "All the Music in Full Context" Paradigm, or the Full-Context Paradigm, in chapter 3 of his book ("Exoticism without Exotic Style"), 43–71. See also Ralph P. Locke, "A Broader View of Musical Exoticism," *The Journal of Musicology* 24 no. 4 (Fall 2007): 477–521.

⁹⁴Lawrence Gilman, "Drama and Music: Mr. Jesse Lynch Williams Amplifies Shaw. A New French Opera at the Metropolitan," *The North American Review* 207, no. 747 (February 1918): 283.

⁹⁵Jacqueline Guisset, "Décors et costumes," 325.

⁹⁶A.D., "A La Monnaie. *Marouf, savetier du Caire*," *Le Soir*, 10 May 1919.

L'Indépendance belge, celebrated the timelessness of the fairy tale, its appeal to modern audiences, and the suitability of a light-hearted subject for an opera-going public that had lived through four years of war.⁹⁷ But he also offered a mixed judgment of Rabaud's music. He wrote of Rabaud's masterful combination of French style, Wagnerian ideas, and the orchestral style of Richard Strauss, but his conclusion about the work as a whole argued that though the music fit the subject, it was not purely original: "La substance musicale des motifs manque de richesse, parfois aussi d'originalité. Mais ils se présentent avec bonne grâce; ils expriment bien ce qu'il faut; ils sont traités avec une variété, une adresse, une éloquence discrète ou éclatante, qui séduit."⁹⁸ *Le Bœuf* went on to offer an analysis of the themes assigned to the characters in the opera, in a similar style to his pre-war reviews of Wagner's compositions.

The TRM continued to stage the opera throughout the season.⁹⁹ *L'Eventail* predicted that Rabaud's music would be part of the company's repertoire for many years to come.¹⁰⁰ The following season, the journal declared that admiration for the work had not flagged, but rather was confirmed by excitement over the revival for that season. *Marouf* appeared at the TRM throughout the 1920s and 30s. Several other operas set in Africa and the Middle East were integral to the TRM's regular repertoire in the interwar years, including Léo Delibes's *Lakmé*,

⁹⁷"Il a gardé la gaité; il a tempéré la volupté; il a rendu les personnages intéressants; il a enveloppé le tout d'une ironie subtile procurant ainsi à un auditoire moderne, plus blasé, plus averti, un amusement supplémentaire d'une qualité très fine" (Henry Lesbroussart [Henry Le Bœuf], "Chronique musicale. *Marouf*," *L'Indépendance belge*, 15 May 1919). Henri Mangin, writing for *Le Peuple*, echoed Le Bœuf's evaluation that the opera's structure and musical style was not particularly innovative. Mangin draws a comparison between Rabaud's score and Delibes's *Lakmé*, which was a favorite at the TRM before and after World War I (Henri Mangin, "A La Monnaie. *Marouf*, ou le Savetier du Caire," *Le Peuple*, 10 May 1919).

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Henri Rabaud wrote to de Thoran after hearing the production on 17 October 1919 to thank the company, and particularly the orchestra, for "la parfaite exécution" of his opera. Archives de la Monnaie, TLET1/13, available through CARMEN, Les Archives Digitales de la Monnaie (<http://carmen.demunt.be/pls/carmen/carmen.cstart2?t=1&id=-1&sid=-1>). Accessed 20 September 2012.

¹⁰⁰"*Marouf*," *Eventail* 7 May 1922; "Choses de théâtre," *Eventail* 2 July 1922.

Jules Massenet's *Hérodiade*, and Giuseppe Verdi's *Aïda* (translated by Camille du Locle and Charles Nutter).

Russian operas also figured into the TRM's repertoire. These productions, however, did not enjoy the longevity that *Marouf* did. New stagings of Russian operas, most written in the late nineteenth century, became important events in the TRM's seasons: Moussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* in 1922; Borodin's *Prince Igor* in 1925; Sergey Prokofiev's *Le Joueur* in 1929; and Tchaikovsky's *Dame de Pique* in 1931. Before the war, Russian music offered an alternative to Wagnerian style, and Belgian programming focused primarily on chamber music, ballet music, and orchestral music by Russian composers; the fashion for Russian opera at the TRM was largely a post-war phenomenon.¹⁰¹

For the 1921–22 season, the TRM organized the Belgian premiere of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* (composed 1868–69 and reorchestrated by Nicholay Rimsky-Korsakov in 1896, in translation by Michel Delines). The premiere was treated as an important event in the press, with articles anticipating the first performance in all of the major daily journals (including sketches of the costume and set design) and reviews following it.¹⁰² In 1923, *L'Eventail* declared in a review of the revived production: "L'ouvrage, loin d'avoir perdu de l'éclat qu'il avait en sa nouveauté, semble avoir conquis encore plus de prestige et s'être affirmé, avec plus de force que jamais, comme une des productions les plus puissantes et les plus originales de la scène lyrique."¹⁰³ Citing the free structure of the work, the author described an intense impression of reality, a

¹⁰¹Malou Haine, Hugo Rodriguez, and Izana Dobbelaere trace the fascination Russian culture in Belgium to the patronage of the Countess Mercy-Argenteau in Liège in the 1880s. Their article concentrates on Russian chamber and orchestral music, literature, and painting. See "La Belgique à l'heure russe (1880–1914)," in *Bruxelles, convergence des arts 1880–1914*, ed. Malou Haine, and Denis Laoureux with Sandrine Thieffrey (Paris: Vrin, 2013), 251–270. See also Carlo Bronne, *La Comtesse de Mercy Argenteau*, 2nd ed. (Liège: Solédi, 1945).

¹⁰²See, for instance François Rasse's "Au TRM. Boris Godounow," *Le Soir*, 14 December 1921.

¹⁰³"TRM. Boris Godounow," *L'Eventail*, 11 March 1923.

quality that Belgians admired in many of the Russian operas that the TRM presented in the interwar years. Enthusiasm for this style contrasted with the value that some placed the escapism of fairy tale settings, such as Rabaud's *Marouf*. Despite the enthusiasm in the press leading up to the premiere of Moussorgsky's opera, however, the work was not revived after 1923. Three years after the Mussorgsky premiere, the TRM staged a new translation of Borodin's *Prince Igor* (completed in 1890, translated by Jules Ruelle), followed by Mussorgsky's *La Foire de Sorotchintzi* (translated by Louis Laloy), and Tchaikovsky's *La Dame de Pique* in 1932, all of which received similar treatment in the press.

One of the showpieces of the 1928–29 season was the world premiere of Prokofiev's *Igrok*, in French translation by Paul Spaak as *Le Joueur*. Prokofiev suspected the Monnaie of attempting to head off the Leningrad opera in order to have the distinction of having the world premiere in Brussels.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, when he arrived in Brussels in late April 1929 for the final rehearsals, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the work and the performers. "The overall impression created was one of untidiness and clutter: I must write another opera, much simpler, with fewer scrappy fragments and disjointed lines!"¹⁰⁵ In the days that followed the first rehearsal he heard in Brussels, Prokofiev made cuts, and inserted a short scene in order to improve the first act, which he judged as the weakest. De Thoran agreed with him on this evaluation.¹⁰⁶ He also worked to refine Spaak's translation. Of Spaak, he wrote: "As a translator he is very resourceful and inventive, always ready to go the extra mile to meet the author

¹⁰⁴*Sergey Prokofiev: Diaries 1924–1933. Prodigal Son*, trans. and ed. Anthony Phillips (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 799.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 809.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 809–10.

halfway.”¹⁰⁷ Four days before the opening, Prokofiev saw the sets for the first time, of which he complained: “[it] looks ludicrously undistinguished. I am used to working with Diaghilev and with Russian theaters where settings are works of art in themselves, so was taken aback to see such a drab, commonplace example of conventional design.”¹⁰⁸ The costumes, however, improved the overall effect: “[they] are far more interesting than the scenery and immediately greatly enhanced the impact of the production.”¹⁰⁹

The press awaited the premiere with anticipation, fueled by the success of the composer’s orchestral works at the Concerts Populaires. Despite the novelty of the work, however, some viewed the production as conservative, financially-motivated, and oriented toward confirming the company’s international reputation. Georges Systemans, for instance, wrote of the publicity surrounding the upcoming production and its place in the Monnaie’s repertoire:

On ne reprochera pas aux directeurs du Théâtre de la Monnaie de manquer l’éclectisme ni de se laisser guider dans leur choix d’œuvres nouvelles, par le souci du succès d’argent. “Deborah et Jaële”, de par son austérité même se trouvait vouée d’avance à la brève carrière qu’elle a fournie chez nous [...]. Et l’on ne pourrait tenter que de vagues pronostics sur l’accueil que réservera le public courant à ce “Joueur” dont les Bruxellois sont les premiers à devoir apprécier l’originalité.

C’est donc le seul désir de manifester des états typiques de l’internationalisme musical qui aura déterminé la Monnaie à nous présenter, dans l’interprétation et le cadre les plus brillants, une pittoresque partition jeune-russe après la noble affirmation du génie transalpin.¹¹⁰

Systemans he concluded that Prokofiev’s efforts were studied, rather than spontaneous, and therefore did not fit the character of the Dostoyevsky text, which he praised for its vivacity. After

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 811.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 810.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 811.

¹¹⁰Georges Systemans, “Le Mouvement Musical: ‘Le Joueur’ de Prokofieff au Théâtre de la Monnaie.—Musique sacrée: Maîtrise du Sablon, Maîtrise de Strombaut.—Pour un monument Debussy,” *La Libre Belgique*, 7 May 1929.

his second hearing however, Systemans changed his mind.¹¹¹ Whatever his reservations about the work itself may have been, he offered unmitigated praise for the TRM:

L'interprétation musicale et plastique du 'Joueur' est remarquable, chacun des 32 titulaires de rôles apportant la sûreté de diction et d'intonation indispensable pour manœuvrer à travers les embûches d'une telle partition. De cet ensemble si bien équilibré émergent M. Lens, que sa création du héros principal place au rang de nos meilleurs ténors de mi-caractère; Mme Ballard dont la parfaite articulation devrait servir d'exemple à tous; M. Yovanovitch, Mmes Leblanc et Andry.¹¹²

Of de Thoran, Systemans wrote: "M. Corneil de Thoran, très au fait des avatars récents du répertoire lyrique, inculque à l'orchestre des qualités de rythme et de précision qu'on est heureux de retrouver."¹¹³ Paul Tinel, writing for *Le Soir*, offered nearly identical observations about Prokofiev's treatment of the Dostoevsky novel, the music, and de Thoran's conducting (though not for his role as director of the company).¹¹⁴

For Philippe Mousset, the critic for *La Nation Belge*, the effect of the composer's setting of the Dostoyevsky opera fell flat:

M. Prokofieff n'a rien abandonnée et n'a, non plus, rien inventé; il s'est borné à adapter à sa mesure et à ses moyens la nouvelle de Dostoievski, qui devient, maintenant, la chose la plus fantaisiste, la plus fantastique, la plus incohérente aussi qu'on puisse imaginer. Le sujet n'existe plus que par le titre, l'action est devenue incompréhensible, et les personnages ne sont plus que des fantoches qui s'agitent, se démènent, crient, hurlent se bousculent et s'invectivent sans que nous puissions savoir pourquoi et, chose plus grave, sans qu'eux-mêmes paraissent le savoir.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹Ibid. This evaluation contradicts with Jacqueline Guisset's analysis of the role that production design played in creating escapist exotic atmospheres at the TRM ("Decors et costumes").

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Paul Tinel, "Au Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie: *Le Joueur*" *Le Soir*, 1 May 1929.

¹¹⁵Philippe Mousset, "Les Premières à Bruxelles: *Le Joueur*, comédie lyrique d'après Dostoievski, mise en musique par Serge Prokofieff," *La Nation Belge*, 1 May 1929.

Like his colleagues, Mousset was willing to offer praise to the Monnaie despite his reservations about the music and the dramatic structure of the opera:

Quoi qu'on puisse dire ou penser sur la valeur de cette nouvelle comédie musicale et sur l'intérêt qu'elle présente, du point de vue de l'art, il faut rendre hommage à la Monnaie qui n'a hésité, pour nous la faire connaître, ni devant les risques, ni devant le travail formidable que sa réalisation a réclamé; notre grande scène lyrique se doit à elle-même de rester parmi les premières dans le mouvement musical; tout le monde doit, sans parti-pris, l'en féliciter.¹¹⁶

Mousset placed particular value on the tradition of the Monnaie and its reputation, above even aesthetic concerns or his own taste. He celebrated novelty and the avant-garde for its own sake and for its implications in preserving the Monnaie's international reputation, which hinged on being open to new works, and especially new works by internationally-recognized composers. Prokofiev's opera was revived for the 1929–30 season, when it was performed six times. It did not appear on the TRM program again after that.

At the same time that the TRM was staging new productions of Russian operas that were unknown to Belgian audiences, a parallel push, driven by nostalgia for the noble Germany of the pre-war period, to reframe and rediscover German culture was also taking place. Wagner's music, as I have discussed in chapter 1, reentered Belgian repertoire in the context of symphonic concerts rather than at the opera house. One of the first steps towards reintegrating German works at the TRM was the production of Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz* in December 1922. The author of a 3 December 1922 article that appeared in *L'Eventail* idealizes the opera's depiction of everyday life in Germany, comparing the connection between the drama and the music to that of *Fidelio*:

Tendre, sincère comme une effusion spontanée du cœur, facile et 'populaire' sans banalité, le chant du musicien semble toujours celui-à seul que parent avoir aux lèvres ses héros campagnards; mais s'il exprime ainsi l'un des caractères du poème, s'il traduit à

¹¹⁶Ibid.

souhait le “Gemüth” [sic] allemand, il trouve, avec une aussi complète réussite, les accents assombris, farouches et puissants que réclame le mystère angoissant de la légende [...]¹¹⁷

Der Freishütz was also touted as one of Kufferath’s projects that de Thoran, Van Glabbeke, and Spaak administration completed after his death:

Ce fut toujours un des vœux de Maurice Kufferath de nous rendre le *Freischütz* dans sa forme originale et primitive. Ce vœu vient d’être réalisé et la direction C. de Thoran, Van Glabbeke et Spaak aura accompli un geste d’art intelligent qui lui vaudra la sympathie des artistes et des dilettantes.¹¹⁸

In 1925, the TRM staged Schubert’s 1823 opera *Fierabras*. It was the first complete production of the work (an 1897 performance in Karlsruhe featured recitatives by Otto Neitzel). In the weeks leading up to the premiere at the TRM, *L’Eventail* published a series of articles on Schubert and the work. In one such article, Lucien Solvay drew an analogy between Schubert’s struggles to get his operas performed in Vienna during his lifetime and that of Belgian composers to have their own works produced at the TRM.¹¹⁹ Solvay celebrated the TRM’s choice to stage *Fierabras* as proof of Belgium’s superiority:

La joie que sa [Schubert’s] patrie lui refusa, la Belgique la lui a donnée. C’est une belle revanche, quoiqu’un peu tardive. [...] En la [l’œuvre] sauvant de l’obscurité, la direction de la Monnaie a obéi à un sentiment hautement louable de curiosité artistique. Un théâtre comme le nôtre se doit non seulement de mettre le public au courant de la production contemporaine, mais aussi de l’instruire des œuvres du passé dignes d’être connues, quand elles ne le sont pas encore, et surtout, quand un injuste oubli les a sacrifiées.¹²⁰

Solvay lionizes the TRM not only as an artistic venture, but as an organization that seeks justice for works of art.

¹¹⁷“Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. Freischütz,” *L’Eventail*, 3 December 1922.

¹¹⁸Nelson Lekime, “A propos du ‘Freischütz’,” *L’Eventail*, 10 December 1922.

¹¹⁹Lucien Solvay, “Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. Nos premières. Fierabras,” *L’Eventail* 17 January 1926.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*

The elegant on the tram in 2012 proudly recounted a version of the history of the opera house from the perspective of a native Belgian who found significance in the company's creation of a meaningful repertoire of nineteenth-century opera and the perpetuation of the nineteenth-century organizational structure. This rendering of the TRM leaves little room for the story of stagings of new operas with musical styles that challenged the taste for representations of home and for exoticism. Between the wars, the TRM's directors and their advisors (including Le Bœuf and Collaer) focused on both the old and the new, effectively preserving the memory of the pre-war opera company and at the same time keeping Brussels on the map of key venues for the performance of new music. Significant events in the company's interwar history, such as the productions of Milhaud's *Les Malheurs d'Orphée* in 1926, *Orestie* in 1927, Stravinsky's *Le baiser de la fée* in 1928, or the French-language premiere of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* in 1932 fade into the background in the gentleman's version of the TRM's history. On that late summer day in 2012, the questions of Milhaud's use of orchestration and polytonality, Stravinsky's shifting compositional techniques, and Berg's use of atonality and *Sprechgesang*, which occupied music critics of the time and would have been more significant to non-Belgians' perceptions of the company, disappeared in favor of a strong nationalist narrative about the nation's *première scène lyrique*.

CHAPTER 4: QUEEN ELISABETH'S PATRONAGE: PERSONAL TASTE MEETS NATIONAL POLITICS

In 2014, Queen Mathilde of the Belgians assumed the role of patron of the annual Concours Reine Elisabeth, becoming the steward of a specific musical vision for Belgium that is steeped in the politics and rhetoric of the interwar period. The competition attracts international attention to Brussels, and the drama of a series of the public performances grips the musical world both in Belgium and abroad for two weeks each year. The Belgian queen presides over the proceedings which, culminate in concerts at the main concert hall of the Palais des Beaux-Arts (PBA). The competition stands as Queen Elisabeth's indelible mark on Belgian cultural life. Although the official patronage has been passed from queen to queen, the competition continues to be "hers." It is the result of a gradual shift in her persona during the 1920s and 1930s—from amateur violinist and private salonnière to the founder of a musical organization that has continued to shape Belgian musical life into the twenty-first century. In Belgium, Elisabeth is remembered as an unbiased champion of young musicians around the world, a standard against which all Belgian queens since have been measured.

The Bavarian wife of the beloved "warrior-King" Albert I, Elisabeth, Queen of the Belgians, wholeheartedly embraced her adopted country and her official role as its representative. The Belgians, in turn, celebrated their queen for her cosmopolitan refinement and her devotion to the nation. She crafted a public image as queen in which her personal interests and official obligations overlapped. Her private, semi-private, and public patronage fostered the music of her adopted nation and satisfied her own tastes as an avid music enthusiast and amateur

performer.¹ Elisabeth struck skillful balances through her patronage: first, between her public obligations as queen and her private artistic aspirations, and second, between her interest in specifically Belgian music and her taste for the cosmopolitan musical avant-garde of the 1920s and 1930s. Brussels offered her opportunities to explore her interests and benefitted from her investment in music as personal pursuit.

Elisabeth's daughter, Princess Marie-José of Belgium, recalled that the queen modeled her patronage after the Renaissance courts of Northern Italy, where aristocratic women were celebrated as paragons of artistic and political sophistication:

Plus tard, je compris cette sorte de fascination que pouvait exercer sur ma mère une Lucrezia Tornabuoni ou une Isabelle d'Este, immortalisées par le prestigieux pinceau d'un Ghirlandaio ou d'un Montegna. Dans son rôle de souveraine, j'aime à croire qu'elle n'oublia jamais ces visions et chercha inconsciemment à y conformer son propre maintien.²

Her Renaissance models sponsored intimate courtly activities and public events for the greater glory of their husbands' principalities. The Belgian queen was a musical mediator at the intersection of an international avant-garde and local artistic and political needs.³ In the context of the political instability in the wake of World War I, Elisabeth had obligations to uphold the

¹Herman Balthazar and Jean Stengers define four "registers" of the Belgian royal family's cultural engagement: obligation of the monarch, which is not necessarily marked by personal interest and relies heavily on tradition; the monarch's personal interest in the cultural development of the country; activities that are important to political agendas; and activities that are inspired by personal taste. Preface to *La dynastie et la culture en Belgique*, ed. Herman Balthazar and Jean Stengers (Antwerp: Fonds Mercator, 1990), 12.

²Marie-José, *Albert et Elisabeth: mes parents* (Brussels: Le Cri, 2000), 223. Marie-José followed in her mother's footsteps as an amateur performer and patron. In Belgium, the princess studied piano performance with Arthur de Greef and earned a diploma in chamber music performance from the Union Musicale Belge. After her marriage to Prince Umberto of Italy in 1930, she organized performances at her residence in Turin. See Agnes Adriaenssen, *Marie-José. Princesse de Belgique, dernière reine d'Italie* (Brussels: Éditions Luc Pire, 2001); and Nicole Dacos and Cécile Dulière, *Une domaine d'une rare fécondité: les relations artistiques entre la Belgique et l'Italie. La Fondation nationale Princesse Marie-José* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005).

³See, among others, Iain Fenlon, *Music and Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Mantua* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980–82); Kelley Harness, *Echoes of Women's Voices: Female Patrons in Early Modern Florence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); Jean Mesnard and Roland Mousnier, eds., *L'âge d'or du mécénat, 1598–1661: Actes du Colloque International CNRS (Mars 1983): Le Mécénat en Europe, et particulièrement en France avant Colbert* (Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1985).

vision of a unified and independent Belgium. Just as personal ownership was central to Collaer's work organizing elite chamber music performance (chapter 2), Le Bœuf's vision of centralized musical life in Brussels (chapters 1 and 5), and de Thoran's strategies to preserve traditions at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie (TRM) (chapter 3), Elisabeth claimed for herself a modern style of royal musical patronage appropriate for the twentieth century. Her personal investment in her projects regularly confronted the question of a collective national identity.

In this chapter, I discuss the process by which the queen explored the possibilities and limitations of royal musical patronage, which culminated in the creation of the Fondation Musicale Reine Elisabeth and the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe, the precursor to today's Concours Reine Elisabeth. Her work with musicians made her a pillar of musical life in and around Brussels during the interwar years. In her support of public musical organizations, the semi-private performances she arranged at the Château de Laeken, and her private recitals and chamber music sessions, Elisabeth thoughtfully balanced the traditional role and responsibilities of a queen with her private tastes and artistic objectives. She adhered to traditionally gendered roles as a mediator, royal patron, and salon hostess. Her public musical support contributed to the theatricality of the monarchy, which capitalized on the king and queen's reputations as wartime heroes and their peacetime images as capable and cosmopolitan leaders of the nation. The queen combined open and active support with concealed manipulation. Her support for music intersected, and sometimes came into conflict, with the artistic and political objectives of her contemporaries.

Most women occupied circumscribed positions in Belgian musical life, even among the liberal circles that invited their intellectual input, but Elisabeth's social and political position

offered her a unique set of possibilities.⁴ As queen, Elisabeth enjoyed privileged access to local and to international networks of musicians. She had a large private fortune to fund her projects, she could bestow official royal patronage on musical groups to ensure their financial stability, and she was in a position to raise funds from the wealthy aristocrats, financiers, and industrialists in her intimate circle of friends. She cultivated personal and official relationships that connected her to the leading musical organizations in Brussels. Her friendship with Le Bœuf in particular shaped her association with the Concerts Populaires, the Palais des Beaux-Arts (PBA), and the Société Philharmonique. She also attended nationally important events at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie (TRM) in her official capacity as queen, and the Belgian press did not miss the symbolic weight of her presence. Elisabeth was also a driving force behind a number of significant musical events in Brussels and abroad that helped to build upon, and expand, the city's reputation as an important musical center.

The queen offset her support for specifically Belgian projects with the cosmopolitan tastes of the cultural elite of the interwar years. Her patronage of foreign music and musicians invites comparisons to her Parisian contemporaries, especially the Princess de Polignac and the Countess Greffulhe, who also merged personal tastes and engagement with social and political concerns of the period, but did so entirely on their own terms, uninhibited by official obligations.⁵ In fact, Elisabeth had direct connections to Greffulhe's salon, which she visited on

⁴Women most often contributed to Brussels's musical life by building partnerships with influential men: Lallah Vandervelde worked with musicologist Charles Van den Borren at the Institut des Hautes Études de Belgique and the Maison du Peuple (see chapter 5); Suzanne Stoclet and her husband Adolphe organized concerts and lectures at their lavish home (see chapter 2); Louise Le Bœuf helped her husband establish the Chorale César Franck (see chapter 1); May de Rudder was the regular music critic for *L'Eventail*; and Suzanne Daneau collaborated with Paul Brohée and Edmond Delescluze on the *Gazette musicale de Belgique et revue de tous les arts* (see my epilogue).

⁵Extensive research has been done on these two Parisian patrons. See Emma Adlard, "Private Lives and Public Display: Women Patrons of Early Twentieth-Century French Musical Culture," Ph.D. diss., King's College London, 2014; Anne de Bossé-Brissac, *La Comtesse Greffulhe* (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1991); Jeanice Brooks, "Nadia Boulanger and the Salon of the Princesse de Polignac," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 46,

her trips to Paris.⁶ Many of the composers and performers who benefitted from the support of Polignac or Greffulhe also received Elisabeth's patronage in Brussels, including Gabriel Fauré and Igor Stravinsky, and the pianist Clara Haskil.

From Pre-War Bavaria to Wartime Belgium: Elisabeth's Entry into Belgian Society

King Albert and Queen Elisabeth's coronation in December of 1909 marked the beginning of a new era for Belgium, politically and culturally. During Léopold II's tumultuous reign (1865–1909), the king's imperial ambitions and personal relationships alienated many liberal Belgians as well as international personalities.⁷ Léopold II's wife, Queen Marie-Henriette (1836–1902),

no. 3 (1993): 415–68; Myriam Chimènes, *Mécènes et musiciens: du salon au concert à Paris sous la III^e République* (Paris: Fayard, 2004); Michael de Cossart, *Une américaine à Paris: La Princesse Edmond de Polignac et son salon (1865–1943)* (Paris: Plon, 1978); Sylvia Kahan, *Music's Modern Muse: A Life of Winnaretta Singer, Princesse de Polignac* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003); and Jann Pasler, "Countess Greffulhe as Entrepreneur: Negotiating Class, Gender and Nation," in *Writing through Music: Essays on Music, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 285–318.

⁶*L'Eventail* described the queen's connections to Parisian high society. Elisabeth paid short visits to the French capital in order to attend artistic and literary gatherings, especially those hosted by Greffulhe. Elisabeth often travelled incognito, making it difficult to track her movements and involvement in Parisian circles. "Notes de la Semaine," *L'Eventail*, 27 December 1925. The Countess Greffuhle was born in Belgium to Joseph de Riquet de Caraman, Prince de Chimay. Elisabeth's lady-in-waiting, Countess Ghislaine de Caraman-Chimay, was Greffuhle's first cousin. For more on the Chimay family as patrons of the arts, see Marie Cornaz, *Les Princes de Chimay et la musique: Une famille de mélomanes au cœur de l'histoire, XVI^e–XX^e siècle* (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 2002).

⁷For more on Leopold's imperial ambitions in Central Africa, see Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Herosim in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998). The king's affair with Caroline Vaughn (née Blanche Delacroix) at the end of his life, was public knowledge and neither he nor she attempted to conceal it. When Léopold II died, Vaughn was only twenty-five. She was sent to live in Paris with a large fortune. Such alienation of the king from his nation is apparent in Charles d'Ydewalle, *Elisabeth de Belgique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1964), 38–43. Although he estranged many of his contemporaries in Belgium with his policies, Léopold II was, and remains, a lionized figure in Belgian history. Profits from the Congo Free State, from which the king and his business partners extracted natural resources, funded many civic projects in Brussels, changing the face of the city permanently. Only one of the king's monumental projects, the Palais du Cinquentaenaire, included space for cultural activity. For more on these projects, see Liane Ranieri, *Léopold II, urbaniste* (Brussels: Hayez 1973). The contrast between Léopold II's persona, reputation, and court and those of Albert I and Elisabeth is striking. D'Ydewalle describes Albert and Elisabeth as "une curiosité nouvelle, celle de la vertu récompensée, la banale vertu conjugale née du bonheur conjugal, celui-ci enchaînant celle-là." (46). Matthew J. Stanard discusses the rehabilitation of Léopold II's image as part of a nationalist campaign to justify and inspire pride in the Congo as a colony in the early twentieth century (*Selling the Congo: A History of Pro-Empire Propaganda and the Making of Belgian Imperialism* [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011]).

was, by some accounts, an avid musician, attending performances and rehearsals at the Monnaie, and playing the piano and harp.⁸ Others described her as a dilettante who enjoyed only horsemanship and *bel canto* music.⁹ Léopold's overbearing personality, and her estrangement from the king in 1895, however, limited her cultural influence in Brussels. Albert and Elisabeth, by contrast, had refined intellectual backgrounds, and liberals viewed the new monarchs as symbols of the new century. Octave Maus, leader of the Libre Esthétique and editor of *L'Art Moderne*, printed an open letter to the new king in 1909, calling for royal support of the arts, something that he argued had been lacking during Léopold II's reign:

Peu secondé et souvent contrarié par les pouvoirs publics, ignoré de la Cour, [l'Art] s'est accompli hors du rayon de la protection royale, et ses seules forces expansives l'ont miraculeusement élevé au niveau qu'il occupe.

Cette situation a créé entre l'Art et la Monarchie une sorte d'incompatibilité de vues et de sympathies dont les artistes ont pu souffrir [...] Il appartient à Votre Majesté de consacrer par une Bienveillance, une Cordialité d'accueil, une Déférence qui leur ont manqué jusqu'ici les laborieux efforts des citoyens qui, depuis plus d'un quart de siècle, donnent à la Belgique sa physionomie intellectuelle [...] Dès ce jour, une aube d'espérance a lui aux yeux de ceux qui rêvent pour la Belgique une destinée plus haute que celle d'étonner les nations voisines [...].¹⁰

Although Maus addressed his letter to the king, Elisabeth realized this vision of Belgium of the twentieth century. Elisabeth's presence affirmed the significance—both artistic and political—of performances in the city.¹¹ The invitations for private audiences that she extended to visiting

⁸Charles Tardieu gave a lecture on the former queen in 1922 during which he described Marie-Henriette: "Elle aimait les arts et surtout la musique. Son assiduité aux représentations de la Monnaie et même aux répétitions générales, était proverbiale. Elle se plaisait à féliciter les auteurs et à encourager les interprètes. Non seulement elle sentait vivement les beautés de l'art musical, mais, par surcroît, elle le cultivait, jouant du piano, de la harpe, et même, à l'occasion, composant des fantaisies sur des motifs empruntés à ses opéras favoris, ou se risquant à des inspirations originales." "Notes de la semaine," *L'Eventail*, 20 August 1922.

⁹D'Ydewalle, *Elisabeth de Belgique*, 19.

¹⁰Octave Maus, "A S.M. Albert, Roi des Belges," *L'Art moderne* 29, no. 52 (26 December 1909): 407–9.

¹¹In fact, in 1932, Alban Berg, writing to his wife from Brussels in the days leading up to the premiere of *Wozzeck* at the TRM wrote: "Socially it [the premiere] is not a 'top event'. The King goes only to see old stuff, e.g. *Marouf* [...] For *Wozzeck* there are so far no plans for anything like those celebrations." Letter to Helene Berg, 24 February 1932. In *Alban Berg: Letters to His Wife*, ed. and trans. Bernard Grun (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), 386.

artists became a coveted symbol of her recognition. These artists' presence, in turn, lent further international visibility to the Belgian court. Between 1909 and the beginning of World War I, Elisabeth also set about laying a foundation for her own royal organization modeled after the Renaissance Italian courts, nineteenth-century Bavarian cultural circles, and Parisian salons. She renovated the theater at the royal residence in Laeken and hosted her own musical performances there.

Elisabeth's background prepared her well for her role as Queen of the Belgians. Born at Possenhofen in Bavaria in 1876 to a branch of the Bavarian royal family, she studied philosophy and music, especially violin performance, at a boarding school for daughters of the aristocracy and upper bourgeoisie. She also assisted her father, Duke Karl-Theodor, in his optometry practice and took university courses in medicine in Munich.¹² This combination of traditional aspects of late nineteenth-century women's education and the abstract philosophical reflection and the practical application of medical training that were still largely reserved for men was unusual.¹³ Elisabeth's exposure to the cosmopolitan musical life of Munich—one that defined itself in opposition to Berlin, the Prussian capital—shaped her artistic tastes and her understanding of the relationship between culture and politics.¹⁴ From her family, the young

¹²The queen periodically attended medical conferences in Belgium after World War I. In 1926, she created the Fondation Médicale Reine Elisabeth, which supports medical research in Belgium.

¹³Late nineteenth-century education for women allowed for more comprehensive instruction as well as more specialized studies, but Elisabeth's training was extraordinary. For more on changes in education, see James C. Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Margaret Bryant, *The Unexpected Revolution: A Study in the History of the Education of Women and Girls in the Nineteenth Century* (London: University of London, Institute of Education, 1979); Deirdre Raftery, "The Opening of Higher Education to Women in Nineteenth Century England: 'Unexpected Revolution' or Inevitable Change?" *Higher Education Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (October 2002): 331–46; and Rebecca Rogers, *From the Salon to the Schoolroom: Educating Bourgeois Girls in Nineteenth-Century France* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).

¹⁴Charles d'Ydewalle drew a direct comparison between the cosmopolitanism of Munich and that of Brussels, going as far as to write about the mingling of Latin elements with the German in Bavaria (*Elisabeth de Belgique*, 21).

duchess learned about art, music, and philosophy. She also developed her interest in social progress and cognizance of the public duties of members of the royal family. Elisabeth's interest in social issues, her passion for music, and the value she placed on the kind of rich cultural life that she had experienced in Bavaria shaped both her private and public works for the rest of her life. Albert had received a more limited education at the Ecole Militaire in Brussels, under the watchful eye of Major Jungbluth. The future king's education excluded study of the humanities, and the king expressed self-consciousness about this gap in his royal education, going as far as to supervise his own children's education.¹⁵

On 2 October 1900, Elisabeth married Prince Albert of Belgium. After their marriage, the press reported avidly on the new princess's presence at the many cultural and social events in Brussels.¹⁶ She made official appearances at the Monnaie for benefit performances, most often accompanying her husband and other members of the Belgian court. Private societies organized special performances upon her arrival in Brussels. On 7 October 1900, for instance, the Cercle Artistique et Littéraire offered a performance featuring three stars of the Belgian musical scene in her honor: Eugène Ysaÿe, Arthur de Greef, and Ernest Van Dyck.¹⁷ Moreover, Elisabeth's presence (without Albert) at the concerts and art exhibitions organized by La Libre Esthétique anticipated her post-war engagement with new music. The journal *L'Art moderne* framed

¹⁵D'Ydewalle described the king's sense that his early education was incomplete and his inclination to study the sciences rather than the humanities. Albert's parents were both known for their cultivated tastes and engagement with the arts in Brussels and abroad. D'Ydewalle indicated that to Albert's status as the second son of the Count and Countess of Flanders, and second in line to the throne for most of his childhood, as well as to his family's assumptions that he had only limited taste and capacity for learning as accounted for his unbalanced education. *Ibid.*, 24–30.

¹⁶On the twenty-fifth anniversary of their marriage, *Eventail* published an article that claimed that the royal marriage in 1900 offered the politically divided nation a "préoccupation commune." The article described the Belgians, as a group, celebrating Elisabeth's arrival as a sign of the future. "Les noces d'argent du Roi et de la Reine," *L'Eventail*, 4 October 1925.

¹⁷Malou Haine, "Les prestations Bruxelloises du ténor wagnérien Ernest Van Dyck de 1883 à 1912," *La Monnaie wagnérienne*, ed. Manuel Couvreur (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 1998), 194.

Elisabeth's presence at such events as a testament to the importance of the circle's dedication to modern art and especially to new Belgian works.¹⁸

Despite the rich cultural activity she encountered at La Libre Esthétique, Elisabeth's correspondence from the years before her coronation suggests that she missed the kind of intellectual and artistic gatherings in Bavaria. She wrote of a visit to Bamberg: "Hier, après-midi, j'ai été chez ma sœur Marie-Gabrielle, à une réunion musicale. Il n'y avait que des artistes. C'était très intéressant. Je voudrais bien aussi avoir des réunions de ce genre à Bruxelles. Mais je ne sais pas qui pourrait les organiser?"¹⁹ In Belgium, Elisabeth continued her private violin studies, but it was only after her coronation on 23 December 1909, that she was in the position to organize performances and meetings with artists at the royal residences.²⁰ By the end of the 1920s, the queen had expanded her ambitions to organize the kind of private gatherings that she enjoyed before the war. She looked to create a more permanent and more public forum for her patronage. From the summer of 1929, her private performances at the royal residences were no longer a collection of individual events, but rather part of her vision for a sustainable foundation that would benefit not only the royal court, but also the public, and Belgian and foreign musicians. This shift in her ambitions shows how she discovered and took advantage of the possibilities that her position as queen afforded her.

The German invasion of Belgium on 4 August 1914 delayed Elisabeth's musical activities in Brussels for four years. The royal family fled first to Antwerp and then to La Panne,

¹⁸The "Petite chronique" in *L'Art moderne* included reports on Elisabeth's attendance at concerts and exhibitions beginning in 1908. See, for example, *L'Art moderne* 28, no. 15 (5 April 1908): 110; and 32, no. 14 (7 April 1912): 110.

¹⁹Quoted in Marie-José, *Albert et Elisabeth*, 91. Elisabeth wrote the letter sometime before she became queen.

²⁰*L'Art moderne* reported that upon her arrival in Belgium, Elisabeth consulted with Emile Agniez, violist and professor at the Conservatoire de Bruxelles. "Nécrologie. Émile Agniez." *L'Art moderne* 29, no. 23 (6 June 1909): 182. Elisabeth also studied with Eugène Ysaÿe, who was a regular visitor at the Château de Laeken.

on the Atlantic coast, where the king and queen remained for the duration of the war. During that time, Elisabeth became a national heroine through her work with wounded soldiers. She founded a hospital at the Palais Royal in Brussels before she fled the capital. In La Panne, she established a second hospital, the Ambulance de l'Océan. She visited wounded Belgian troops and military camps, and as early as 1915, she was known fondly as “the nurse-queen.”

Belgians and their allies fashioned the queen into a symbol of Belgian determination in the face of impossible odds. Despite her Bavarian ties, Elisabeth “s’identifia si totalement aux exigences et aux désirs de sa nouvelle patrie que jamais personne ne souvient de ses origines allemandes.”²¹ From the end of 1914 until 1918, Elisabeth’s contact with the musical life in Brussels was limited. Her correspondence with Henry Le Bœuf, who remained in the capital during the war, is particularly illuminating. His letters included detailed accounts of the musical life under the German occupation.²² Even in exile, Elisabeth continued to pursue her interest in music. In La Panne, she organized concerts for soldiers stationed at the front and recovering in hospitals. These concerts featured some of the best-known Belgian and international musicians of the time, particularly Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe and French soprano Claire Croiza. In

²¹Marie-José, *Albert et Elisabeth*, 138. Charles d’Ydewalle made several linguistic moves to recognize Elisabeth’s childhood home as formative to her cosmopolitan identity without conceding her German nationality. For example, he wrote that she had a cosmopolitan flavor: “l’accent cosmopolite de la reine qui ne fut jamais allemand, jamais français non plus, un accent du Saint-Empire, un français de russe et que fredonnait Henri Heine à Paris” (*Elisabeth de Belgique*, 68). This consideration of a European past with a more fluid structure of borders and linguistic divide also appears in Henri Pirenne’s work on the history of the Belgian nation and Charles Van den Borren’s studies of the musical legacy of the Low Countries.

²²For Le Bœuf’s letters to the queen, dating from 1911 through 1935, see Archives du Secrétariat de la Reine Elisabeth, Archives du Palais Royal, Brussels (ASRE), AE 668. Other musicians discussed musical activity in the capital in their correspondence as well. In a letter from Geneva, for instance, Kufferath wrote to de Thoran of the German requirements that at least a third of each public program had to be German repertoire, and Emile Bosquet’s solution of only giving concerts by invitation. Kufferath also was outraged that Mme. Mottle-Fasbender, who had appeared on the TRM stage before the war as Isolde and Elektra had returned to Brussels to sing Brunhilde in a performance of Wagner’s Ring by a German troupe. Kufferath, however, concluded his letter by celebrating the morale of the Belgian troops at the front. Maurice Kufferath to Corneil de Thoran, July 1916. Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique/ Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België (KBR), documents varia, 7C 978/20/3.

1917, Elisabeth sponsored the creation of the Orchestre Symphonique de l'Armée en Campagne (OSAC), directed by Corneil de Thoran.²³ Belgian composers were featured prominently in the OSAC repertoire, especially César Franck, Joseph Jongen, Jan Blockx, and André Ernest Modeste Grétry.²⁴ In a letter from Geneva, the exiled Kufferath congratulated de Thoran on his work with the orchestra: "Les fronts de bataille sont multiples et la défense de notre patrimoine moral et intellectuel est aussi importante que celle de notre sol et de nos industries. Il faut le dire et répéter très haut!"²⁵ The orchestra offered performances at the Hôpital de l'Océan and the Hôpital de Beveren, as well as concerts in Paris and a performance at the Royal Albert Hall in London in July 1918.²⁶ De Thoran later wrote of the queen's involvement with the OSAC: "Deux miracles réalisés par la Reine: l'éclosion en plein tourment d'une phalange musicale formée d'éléments de valeur et la révélation chez nos humbles soldats d'un sensibilité artistique et d'un goût insoupçonnée."²⁷ Elisabeth and her musical collaborators undoubtedly saw their musical work as a contribution to the nation's welfare in terms of both boosting troop morale and

²³Elisabeth offered both moral and financial support for the project, which was approved in October 1917. Gilles Remy, "Corneil de Thoran (1881–1953): La plus longue carrière de chef d'orchestre et de directeur de la Monnaie," in *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 286.

²⁴These composers, particularly César Franck and Grétry, represented the Franco-Belgian compositional tradition throughout the twentieth century, both in Belgium and abroad. I discuss the implications of the small group of composers whose works appeared consistently on programs in the interwar years as representative of Belgian music in chapter 3 and the epilogue. An album of programs from the OSAC from 1917 to 1919, probably presented to the queen by de Thoran, survives in the ASRE, AE 771. See also José Quitin and Michel Stockhem, "La Reine Elisabeth et la vie musicale belge," in *La Dynastie et la culture en Belgique*, ed. Herman Balthazar and Jean Stengers (Antwerp: Fonds Mercator, 1990), 279–90.

²⁵Maurice Kufferath to Corneil de Thoran, 4 January 1918. KBR, documents varia, 7C 978/20/3.

²⁶King George V, Queen Mary, King Albert of Belgium, and Queen Elisabeth attended this concert ("Théâtres," *Le Soir*, 23 November 1918). A portrait of Elisabeth appeared on the cover of the program (ASRE, AE 771). George V awarded de Thoran the Order of Queen Victoria.

²⁷Quoted in Marie-José, *Albert et Elisabeth*, 203. In November of 1920, the queen named De Thoran to the Ordre de Léopold for his work with the OSAC. See "Choses de Théâtre," *L'Eventail*, 28 November 1920.

contributing to social uplift.²⁸ Her status as the “nurse-queen” was not sustainable in post-war Belgium in the same way that this status as the protector of Belgian music and of the Belgian people through cultural uplift was. Privately, the queen also continued her interest in music at La Panne. Under her patronage, in addition to the OSAC, the Cercle Artistique et Littéraire de l’Armée de Campagne was created in July 1918.²⁹

The years between the royal family’s triumphant return to Brussels on 22 November 1918 and King Albert I’s death in 17 February 1934 constituted the most active period in Queen Elisabeth’s patronage. During that time, her relationships with musicians were vital to the development and execution of her projects. To gather information and advice, Elisabeth turned to her contemporaries whose aesthetic, political, and social visions aligned most closely with her own. Cultivating relationships with such intermediaries was a time-honored tradition that allowed an aristocratic patron to reach decisions in line with her own concerns while delegating the administrative work to others.³⁰ In the 1920s, Henry Le Bœuf filled this role for the queen.

²⁸These objectives proceeded from late nineteenth-century principles of educating the masses in the arts. For more on such projects in France, see Jann Pasler, *Composing the Citizen: Music as Public Utility in Third Republic France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 455–60. These are the same initiatives that were at the heart of Henry Le Bœuf’s scheme in the 1930s to introduce reduced-price concerts parallel to the regular subscription series at the Société Philharmonique (see chapter 5).

²⁹Gilles Remy, “Corneil de Thoran,” 287.

³⁰Winnaretta Singer, Princess de Polignac, for example, relied first on Gabriel Fauré and later on Nadia Boulanger for advice on commissions and concert programming. See Jeanice Brooks, “Nadia Boulanger and the Salon of the Princesse de Polignac.”

Elisabeth's Intermediary: Musical Life in Brussels through the Eyes of Henry Le Bœuf

Shortly after Albert and Elisabeth's coronation, Le Bœuf described the queen in an article for

L'Art moderne:

[...] Elle souffre de la distance que la société impose entre elle et vous et que son cœur veut abolir. [...] Elle n'eut certes pas fait une reine de Versailles, une déité lointaine qui n'impressionne que parce qu'on l'ignore. Non; la nôtre peut être connue. Elle trouvera d'autant plus de dévouements qu'elle s'approchera mieux des Belges qui l'on adoptée.³¹

The extensive correspondence between Le Bœuf and the queen from 1911 until his death in 1935

helped to bring Elisabeth closer to the general public by informing her about events in Brussels.

The queen's nascent ambitions to create an organization to benefit young musicians and the

public suggest that Le Bœuf's description was an astute one. But determining the best way to

construct such a foundation required the queen to understand the cultural landscape in Brussels.

The bulk of Le Bœuf's letters offered the queen evaluations of musical performances in the city.

He also asked for her intervention in own his musical projects and invited her to the concerts he

organized, especially the Concerts Populaires. Serving also as her intermediary in many

international communications having to do with music, Le Bœuf was in effect the queen's

advisor on music and musical life both in Brussels and abroad.³² The correspondence offers a

³¹Henry Lesbroussart [Henry Le Bœuf], "La Reine Elisabeth," *L'Art moderne* 30, no. 1 (2 January 1910): 1–2. Le Bœuf enjoyed a close friendship with the royal family beginning in 1901, when his brother, Louis Le Bœuf, became Albert and Elisabeth's physician.

³²In the interwar period, several musicians claimed the title of musical advisor to the royal family, but Le Bœuf was the most active. Despite his title of Maître de la Chapelle de la Cour, Eugène Ysaÿe had only limited contact with the queen immediately after the war. Between 1918 and 1922, he served as conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. Albert and Elisabeth visited Ohio as part of their North American tour in 1919, but Ysaÿe's influence on the musical life at the court during these crucial post-war years was limited. Baron Victor Buffin de Chosal enjoyed the title "conseiller artistique" to Albert I, but did not provide the kind of in-depth evaluations that Le Bœuf wrote for the queen. After World War II, the pianist Walter Rummel claimed to have been the "private and personal advisor to the King and Queen of the Belgians in musical matters" in his "Memorandum" defending his political relationships with the German government (Charles Timbrell, *Prince of Virtuosos: A Life of Walter Rummel, American Pianist* [Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2005], 145).

unique window into how Le Bœuf (and his circle) viewed Elisabeth's potential contributions to the musical life in Brussels.

Le Bœuf was ideally suited to his unofficial role as musical advisor to the queen. His many administrative positions in Brussels allowed him to inform the queen about the latest developments in the musical life of the city.³³ Not only was he the director of the Concerts Populaires, and later the president and general director of the Société Philharmonique (see Chapters 2 and 5), but he was also a member of the commission of the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles, the vice-president of the Fédération Internationale des Concerts, and the vice-president of the Orchestre Symphonique de Bruxelles. By the mid-1920s, his correspondence to the queen took on the form of formal reports, sent to her secretary, Baron Henri de Traux de Wardin. Although Le Bœuf's priority was to inform the queen about the programs at his Concerts Populaires and, after 1928, performances at the PBA, he also offered his perspectives on fellow organizers in Brussels. His descriptions of upcoming programs provided a panorama of musical life in the city for the queen, from the most influential and largest organizations, such as the Concerts Pro Arte and the TRM, to smaller concert series, including the Concerts Defauw, the Concerts Guller, and chamber-music concerts held at the Salle de l'Union Coloniale, the Galerie du Centaure, and the Cercle Artistique et Littéraire.³⁴

Le Bœuf's reports presented the queen with her first contact with each week's musical offerings, and he took what he knew of the queen's musical taste into account when he

³³Le Bœuf's reports are almost exclusively about concerts in Brussels. Other cities in Belgium only appear when the Concerts Populaires organized special events, such as the concert on 26 April 1924 at the Société Royale de Zoologie d'Anvers. Henry Le Bœuf to Baron Henri de Traux de Wardin, 14 April 1924. Fonds Henry Le Bœuf (FHLB), Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique/ Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, Brussels, Mus. Ms. 4147/XXII/21/5.

³⁴Le Bœuf's memos for 1926, 1927, and 1928 are housed in the FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/VII/37 and Mus. Ms. 4147/IX/42/1-5.

composed them. In a letter to soprano Marcelle Bunlet from 1927, Le Bœuf describes the queen's preferences: "La Reine des Belges est musicienne et s'intéresse vivement autant à la musique ancienne peu exécutée, qu'à la musique assez résolument moderne."³⁵ His reports to the queen demonstrate this awareness of the queen's preferences. On the one hand, international composers whose musical idioms resonated with the queen's taste for "resolutely modern" and international styles dominated Le Bœuf's reports. In his notes, he often included commentary on upcoming performances of works by Alfredo Casella, Paul Hindemith, Arthur Honegger, and Ottorino Respighi. On the other hand, Le Bœuf recognized Elisabeth's well-known commitment to musical creation in Belgium, in particular her interest in the Synthétistes, a group of young Belgian composers who studied with Paul Gilson at the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles.

The relationship between Le Bœuf and Elisabeth was mutually beneficial. Reports on Elisabeth's presence at public performances in Brussels indicated that she took Le Bœuf's recommendations to heart. In November 1927, for instance, Le Bœuf praised the styles of three young Italian composers who were to be featured on the 12 November program of the Concerts Populaires: Casella, Respighi, and Vittorio Rieti.³⁶ The queen not only attended the concert, but also received Casella in a private audience soon after.³⁷ Le Bœuf also took advantage of his close relationship with her to advocate for his own musical organizations and projects, hoping to find in the queen a sympathetic listener and a willing collaborator. Not all of Le Bœuf's plans for the

³⁵In this letter, Le Bœuf offers advice to Bunlet for a private performance for the queen at the French embassy in Brussels. Bunlet and Robert Casadesus were to entertain the queen while the king met with the ambassador and other government officials. Henry Le Bœuf to Marcelle Bunlet, 8 July 1927. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/IV/15/6.

³⁶Henry Le Bœuf, Agenda musical, FHLB, Mus. Ms 4147/VII/37.

³⁷Casella's connections to the Belgian royal family continued after 1927. Marie-José, for instance, studied with Casella in Italy after her marriage to Prince Umberto II.

queen were realized, but the success of the PBA project, which I discuss in Chapter 5, indicates that the Elisabeth was open to Le Bœuf's suggestions and advice.

Elisabeth as a National Symbol: The Queen at Public Events

Le Bœuf's recommendations and Elisabeth's official obligations guided her choices of public concerts to attend. Her presence validated the cultural significance of performances themselves as well as the organization that planned them. Consequently, the press covered Elisabeth's attendance assiduously, especially when she appeared in her official capacity.

Her collection of programs and the frequent reports in the music and society columns of the daily press give a sense of the extent of the queen's presence at performances.³⁸ The queen's official duties and her personal taste in music often overlapped.

Elisabeth accepted Le Bœuf's invitations to the Concerts Populaires regularly. Even when she chose to attend the open dress rehearsals instead of the concerts, the press reported on her presence. During the 1921–22 season, for instance, *L'Eventail* reported on the queen's attendance of several general rehearsals late in the season.³⁹ The queen and Princess Marie José were present for the first concert of the 1924–25 season, conducted by Valdimir Golschmann and featuring the overture to Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and Debussy's *La Mer*.

³⁸A collection of one hundred concert programs, some with the queen's annotations on them, is part of the ASRE, AE 820 (Programmes de concerts et récitals donnés en Belgique. 1906, 1910–1912, 1919–1934).

³⁹For the fourth concert of the season, for instance, see May de Rudder, "Musique," *L'Eventail*, 22 January 1922; for the sixth concert of the same season, which took place after the Concerts Populaires Wagner referendum, which included an unstaged performance of the first act of *Die Walküre*, see "Musique," *L'Eventail*, 4 June 1922. For more on Le Bœuf's campaign to re-introduce music by Wagner to Brussels after the war, see chapter 1.

They also heard a rehearsal for a concert later that season that included two new works: Arthur Honegger's *Chant de Joie* and Fernand Leborne's *Judith*.⁴⁰

L'Eventail, was particularly diligent about reporting on visits of the royal family to the TRM. Among the most significant of Elisabeth's outings to the opera house was her attendance with her son, Prince Léopold, at the politically and symbolically charged evening performance of 5 April 1919 featuring François Rasse's *1914* and Léon Dubois's *Vers La Gloire* (see chapter 3 for more on this program). Throughout the 1920s and into the 1930s, the queen attended many more performances there, especially benefit galas. In 1921, for instance, she attended Charles Lecoq's *La Fille de Madame Angot*, which was performed as a benefit for the Mutualité de la Presse on 13 April. Lucien Solvay wrote of her presence at the performance, alongside Albert I:

La présence du Roi et de la Reine donnait à la fête un éclat exceptionnel, sans lui enlever de son animation, de sa cordialité, du joyeux enthousiasme que tout ce monde éprouvait de se voir ainsi réuni, en de si heureuses et de si bienfaisantes circonstances. Le Roi et la Reine sont pour nous des amis; ils n'affectent pas la grave solennité de souverains qui n'inspirent que le respect; ils ne craignent pas de sympathiser avec les sentiments de tous, même les moins officiels, et de montrer qu'ils s'y plaisent, comme de simples mortels...⁴¹

Elisabeth was also present at a 1922 gala performance to raise funds to build a monument to Belgian aviators who died during the war. The program consisted of Jules Massenet's *Le Jongleur de Notre-Dame* followed Pietro Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* and Henry Deutsch de la Meurthe's 1909 song for voice and orchestra, *Vers les Cieux*, whose subtitle, "À la conquête de l'air," was particularly appropriate for an event celebrating military aviators' exploits. In 1926, the king and queen supported the Amicale des Officiers de la Campagne 1914–

⁴⁰May de Rudder, "Musique. Concerts Populaires," *L'Eventail*, 26 October 1924. May de Rudder, "Musique. Concerts populaires," *L'Eventail*, 22 March 1925.

⁴¹Lucien Solvay, "Théâtre de la Monnaie. La Fille de Madame Angot," *L'Eventail*, 17 April 1921.

1918 by attending a performance of Belgian composer August de Boeck's new opera *La Route d'émeraude*.⁴²

Elisabeth also represented Belgium and its culture abroad. Her official visits to foreign countries often included attendance at concerts. Moreover, the queen travelled abroad throughout her life specifically to attend musical events in both official and unofficial capacities.

In 1922, for instance, she represented Belgium at the commemorative concert in honor of César Franck at the Paris Opéra; the Countess Greffulhe presided over the celebrations. One article in *Eventail*, anticipating the event, treated the queen's presence as a matter of course: "C'est la France, c'est l'art français qui décernera un hommage éclatant à César Franck. Mais la reine des Belges sera présente, parce que celui dont la France honore le génie était un Belge."⁴³ The concert publicized Franco-Belgian connections—both cultural and political.

The queen's enthusiasm for public performances could prove a double-edged sword for their organizers. In 1926, Francis Poulenc wrote to Collaer, who was preparing programs for the upcoming season of the Concerts Pro Arte, that he was worried that his recently-completed *Chansons gaillardes* might not be appropriate for the queen's ears: "ce n'est pas du tout pour grand concert Pro Arte; à cause des textes assez scabreux. Voyez-vous la reine entendant parler de pucelage, de catin, etc. au Conservatoire. Scandale."⁴⁴ Collaer and Poulenc decided to forego the performance of the cycle. In fact, the Concerts Pro Arte programs never included this work.

⁴²"Choses de Théâtre," *L'Eventail*, 10 April 1921; "Choses de Théâtre," *Eventail*, 15 May 1922; "Choses de Théâtre," *L'Eventail*, 28 November 1926. On Henry Deutsch de la Meurthe's compositions related to aviation, see Glenn Watkins, *Proof Through the Night: Music and the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 180–87.

⁴³"Actualités. César Franck," *L'Eventail*, 5 March 1922.

⁴⁴Francis Poulenc to Paul Collaer, 11 or 18 January 1926. In Paul Collaer, *Correspondance avec des amis musiciens*, ed. Robert Wangermée (Sprimont, Belgium: Mardaga, 1996), 224.

From time to time, Elisabeth even took an active part in directors' decisions by making requests to music organizers. In 1923, for instance, she asked Le Bœuf to schedule pianist Walter Rummel into the Concerts Populaires season. He was one of the many musicians from whom she requested private command performances. It took two years for Le Bœuf to confirm a date, only to have Rummel change the date again in order to accept a more lucrative invitation in England. Le Bœuf wrote to the queen's secretary insisting that she know that "it is because of him, and not because of me" that Rummel would not appear in the 1926–27 concert season as planned.⁴⁵ Likewise, when the TRM released conductor Charles Strony from his contract, Elisabeth's secretary wrote to Le Bœuf on her behalf to get more information. The letter emphasized the advantage of having a Belgian-born conductor, and a veteran of the war, in the company.⁴⁶ The queen's inquiry was clearly the result of political concerns rather than artistic ones. Le Bœuf was able to discourage the queen from intervening on Strony's behalf, however, citing his weaknesses as a conductor. As he pointed out, the decision was ultimately an artistic one, not a political one.⁴⁷

Elisabeth's annotations on concert programs from public performances offer an unmediated view of her taste that is not apparent in the press. In February 1924, for instance, she attended the second subscription concert of the Concerts Spirituels at the Conservatoire. The second half of the program featured Honegger's *Roi David*. On her program, Elisabeth noted "très belle œuvre étrange et pleine de drame."⁴⁸ On the program for a concert that took place at

⁴⁵Timbrell, *Prince of Virtuosos*, 107; Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts: la création d'un haut lieu de culture à Bruxelles (1928–1945)* (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2000), 72. Henry Le Bœuf to Baron de Traux de Wardin, 28 June 1926. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/IV/17/197.

⁴⁶Baron de Traux de Wardin to Henry Le Bœuf, 19 January 1921. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/XXI/11/2.

⁴⁷Henry Le Bœuf to Baron Traux de Wardin, 22 January 1921. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/XXI/11/3.

⁴⁸ASRE, AE 820.

the French Embassy in Brussels on 4 March 1924—featuring Albert Roussel’s *Divertissement* for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, and piano—Elisabeth wrote “délicieux.”⁴⁹ On the other hand, the queen judged a trio by American composer Alexandre Steinert as having “aucune originalité.”⁵⁰ Just as acerbically, she noted on a Concerts Spirituels program for 29 and 30 November 1924 that Belgian composer Raymond Moulaert’s *Lazarus* for organ was “nul” and that Belgian Léon Dubois’s *L’Aveugle-né* was “assommant.”⁵¹ By contrast, Lucien Solvay, writing for *Eventail*, praised Dubois’s piece in his review of the concert: “Le beau thème du début, chanté à l’unisson des chœurs, traversant toute l’œuvre et s’élargissant magnifiquement dans le finale, établit solidement l’unité de l’œuvre.”⁵² The queen’s immediate and candid evaluations of these Belgian works do not contradict her tireless public support of native composers and musicians. Rather, they show that the queen’s official persona did not erase her personal predilections.

Patronage as Royal Pursuit: Intimate Musical Gatherings at the Belgian Court

Less than a year after her coronation, the queen began exploring the musical possibilities her new position presented. In October 1911, Baron Victor Buffin de Chosal submitted a report to her on the possibilities for concerts and staged productions at the Belgian court. The report proposes a range of repertoire (from early music to new works performed by the composers themselves, especially Fauré, d’Indy, and Saint-Saëns), potential schedules (weekly, bi-weekly, or on

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰The performance by the Trio de la Cour took place at Charles Leirens’s Maison d’Art on 2 February 1934. Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Lucien Solvay, “Musique,” *L’Eventail*, 7 December 1924. Solvay makes no mention of the queen’s presence, suggesting that perhaps she attended the dress rehearsal rather than one of the public performances.

demand), and the advantages to collaborating with artistic organizations in Brussels (particularly the Théâtre Royal du Parc and the TRM).⁵³ The events at the royal residences, as Buffin conceived of them, were to be extensions of musical life in Brussels, making the royal household part of the larger musical landscape of the capital. The proposal received royal approval, and the queen and her assistants followed Buffin's recommendations both before and after the war. They drew from the pool of visiting and native artists in Brussels as they planned for the queen's private events. Furthermore, they recreated productions and programmed repertoire that had been performed in more public venues. In short, the queen exploited the city's musical and social networks for her events at court.

The royal household's musical pursuits were the domain of the queen. The press, guests at the court, and performers recognized Elisabeth as the driving force behind each musical event, with one significant exception discussed below. The queen adopted the traditional role of the wife of a political leader, organizing a diverse array of musical activities in the semi-private realm of the royal residences in Brussels. Her official role and responsibilities, her personal taste, and her close connections with musicians and institutional organizers shaped the performances that she organized (together with a dedicated staff), just as they influenced her patronage of public performances.⁵⁴ Society reports in the press, the queen's business correspondence, and numerous records from the office of the queen's secretary reveal the distinguished and varied field of musical activity at the royal court. They also show how Elisabeth built her most intimate

⁵³Victor Buffin, "Projet d'organisation d'auditions musicales et de représentations scéniques," 20 October 1911, ASRE, AE 822 (Auditions de musique et représentations théâtrales au théâtre du château de Laeken ou au palais de Bruxelles).

⁵⁴The queen's household between the wars included the Count de Lannoy (Grand Maître), the Countess Hemricourt de Grunne (Grande Maîtresse), Charles Graux (Secretary, later replaced by Baron Henri de Traux de Wardin), Baroness Agnès della Faille (Dame du Palais and De Traux de Wardin's wife), and Elisabeth d'Oultremont, the Countess Ghislaine de Caraman-Chimay, and the Countess van den Steen de Jehay (ladies in waiting).

connections with the musical life in Brussels through her exclusive gatherings at the royal residence.⁵⁵

Concerts for the royal court took place at the two royal residences in Brussels: the Palais Royal de Bruxelles and the Château de Laeken. Often paired with society teas, and by invitation only, these events were exclusive gatherings. Although society columns reported on them, the information was limited, and only sometimes included the names of the composers whose works were performed.⁵⁶ In 1923, for instance, the violinist Joseph Szigeti performed for the king and queen at Laeken, with pianist Tassa Yannapoulos. The program, *L'Eventail* reported, included works by Brahms, Dvorák, Corelli, Tartini, Hubay, and Kreisler.⁵⁷ The violinist was in Brussels to play at the Concerts Ysaye.⁵⁸ In December of 1926, the Italian violin prodigy Pietro Mazzini, performed at Laeken. *L'Eventail* reported simply: “Celui-ci a donné une nouvelle et brillante audition devant la Souveraine, S.A.R. la princesse Marie-José, et le maître de chapelle Eugène Ysaye.”⁵⁹ When the queen invited Belgian composer François Rasse to the Palais de Bruxelles, the journal gave more detail about the music performed (one of Rasse’s string quartets and his

⁵⁵Whereas some research has discussed Elisabeth’s musical activities, the links between the public and private realms of royal patronage have not been examined in depth until now. For a discussion of music at the court, see, for example, Carlo Bronne, *Elisabeth de Belgique: reine de cœur, reine des arts* (Brussels: Rossel, 1976); Georges-Henri Dumont, *Elisabeth de Belgique, ou les défis d’une reine* (Paris: Fayard, 1986); and Balthazar and Stengers, eds., *La dynastie et la culture*.

⁵⁶The function of such reports in preserving the structure of elite society was important throughout the Western world. Ruth Brandon, for instance, writes of the significance that members of American high society in the nineteenth century attributed to reports in society columns: “the doings of the elect were continually and tantalizingly dangled before the noses of those who might wish to join that hallowed group, but had not yet contrived to do so.” *The Dollar Princesses: Sagas of Upward Nobility, 1870–1914* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), 20.

⁵⁷“Musique,” *L'Eventail*, 4 February 1923.

⁵⁸“Musique,” *L'Eventail*, 11 February 1923.

⁵⁹“Mondanités. Les Cours,” *L'Eventail*, 5 December 1926.

piano quintet in d minor), but did not include details about who attended.⁶⁰ Such fragmentary reports offered just enough detail to draw attention to the events at court while giving them an aura of intimacy and exclusivity. Their placement in the society columns of *L'Eventail* and journals like it, and the superficial coverage of the musical content of the programs, suggest that the people—musicians and guests of the queen—were just as important, if not more so, than the music. It was through these brief reports that readers learned of the many international performers whose visits to Brussels included a performance for the queen. Canadian soprano Louise Edvina, German-American pianist Walter Rummel, and Polish pianist and composer Ignacy Paderewski were among the musicians who visited the royal court. Some musicians received decorations for their performances at court, including Walter Rummel, who was named a Knight of the Order of Léopold in 1926, and Ricardo Viñes, who received the same decoration earlier in the 1920s.⁶¹ In addition to reports in the press, these awards to foreign musicians were another means to create an overlap of the private and public functions of the court, and strengthened the cosmopolitan reputation of the queen and her guests. Local performers, too—especially Eugène Ysaÿe, Yves Nat, Maurice Dambois, and Emile Bosquet—found themselves playing behind closed doors for the queen and her guests.⁶² Even more concealed from the public eye were the queen's personal relationships both with musicians and fellow amateurs, most importantly Eugène Ysaÿe, Jean Cocteau, Alfred Einstein, and Albert Schweitzer. The queen

⁶⁰“Mondanités. Les Cours,” *L'Eventail*, 27 February 1927.

⁶¹Timbrell, *Prince of Virtuosos*, 95.

⁶²“Mondanités,” *L'Eventail*, 23 March 1919, 16 December 1923, 13 April 1924, and 1 June 1924.

maintained a lively correspondence with this international group and received them at the royal residence when they were in Brussels.⁶³

The Théâtre du Château de Laeken: Private Gatherings and Public Debates

At the beginning of their reign, Elisabeth and Albert hired the architect Octave Flanneau to oversee renovations of the Château de Laeken, including its small theater.⁶⁴ Flanneau transformed the “joujou de théâtre semi circulaire” that “dégageait une odeur de moissure et d’écurie” and “se mourant dans l’abandon les lézardes et l’obscurité humide,” into a place where the royal family could host intimate evenings of music and theater.⁶⁵ It became the most important performance venue for the Belgian court. When the theater hosted productions of particular national interest, the press was granted almost complete access. Articles anticipating these performances, society columns, and reviews of the performances in both French- and Flemish-language journals regularly referred to the court as the queen’s sphere, where the best professional and amateur musicians enjoyed her generous support. By contrast, the press depicted the king’s presence at these events as that of an observer, rather than an active agent in the organization.

The renovated theater was inaugurated on the eve of World War I, on 21 May 1914, with an elegant evening in honor of the king and queen of Denmark. Yet—as *Le Bœuf* reported—

⁶³Marie-José, *Albert et Elisabeth*, 282. Part of Einstein’s correspondence with King Albert and Queen Elisabeth is housed at Albert Einstein Archives at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

⁶⁴Napoleon built the theater for Empress Josephine during their time in Brussels. For a description of all of the modifications that Flanneau made to the royal residence, see E. Ker., “Les Grands Travaux au Palais de Laeken,” *L’Indépendance belge*, 28 April 1914. *Le Vingtième siècle* also gave a detailed account of the work that had to be done on the theater in “Une bonbonnière. Le Théâtre du Palais de Laeken,” 19 April 1914.

⁶⁵Henri Lesbroussart [Henry Le Bœuf], “Le théâtre privé du Château Royal de Laeken,” *L’Art moderne* 34, no. 21 (24 May 1914): 1.

despite the glamour of the attendees, the focus of the evening remained on the performance, which catered to a broad range of tastes, with chamber music, art songs, and a staged performance of excerpt from Christoph Willibald Gluck's *Orphée et Euridice*:

ceci n'est pas un jeu, une 'folie' de souverains fastueux. En inscrivant au programme d'une soirée de musique la *Sonate* de Franck, une ouverture de Beethoven, des fragments de Mozart et de Gluck, en s'adressant aux meilleurs de nos interprètes, en s'occupant minutieusement de la décoration, on a voulu servir surtout la musique. [...] En d'autres temps, en d'autres lieux, un tel public se fût considéré comme s'offrant à lui-même le spectacle essentiel. A Laeken, l'obscurité progressive tourna graduellement les esprits vers la scène, en invitant les spectateurs à s'associer au culte que gardent pour l'art les maîtres de la maison.⁶⁶

At the palace, music functioned as a means of shared cultural uplift and as an expression of national unity—vital strategies in a nation whose political and social identity was split along cultural, political, and linguistic lines. With Eugène Ysaÿe appointed as the Maître de la Chapelle de la Cour, and the restored theater, the royal couple was poised to start a major artistic venture based in Brussels. Elisabeth and her advisors had developed plans for a permanent court orchestra that would also offer free public concerts in Brussels and the major cities in the provinces. After the German invasion in August of 1914, however, the plans were postponed, and later abandoned.⁶⁷

As the musical life in Brussels sprang back to life in the years after the war, so did the court theater, albeit more slowly. Instead of presenting professional singers in the first post-war production at Laeken, as Le Bœuf proposed, the queen invited Belgian tenor Ernest Van Dyck to

⁶⁶Ibid., 2. *L'Eventail* reported that the queen herself helped design the set for the opening, taking advantage of the architectural design of the theater, with the stage opening into the greenhouses behind it ("Choses de Théâtre," 10 May 1914).

⁶⁷There is evidence that as late as 1921, the plan to organize free public concerts in Brussels and the major provincial centers through the court had not been abandoned completely. *L'Eventail* reported in July of that year that Ysaÿe was postponing his consideration of the idea in order to focus on more pressing matters. "Choses de Théâtre," *L'Eventail*, 24 July 1921.

direct his students at the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles in a performance for the court.⁶⁸ The 29 May 1922 double bill featured two nineteenth-century opéras-comiques: *La Surprise de l'Amour* by Ferdinand Poise and *Bonsoir, Monsieur Pantalon* by Albert Grisar.⁶⁹ It showcased the future of Belgian music prominently. *L'Eventail* did not publish a review of the performance, but a report did appear in its society column. The queen's guest list included much of the Belgian aristocracy and many government ministers, the majority of whom became regular visitors to the Château de Laeken in the interwar years.⁷⁰ Among the most frequent visitors to the court were: Auguste de Boeck, composer; Paul Hymans, minister of foreign affairs; Joseph Jongen, composer and director of the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles; Henry Le Bœuf and his wife Louise; Maurice Lippens, governor of the Belgian Congo; Adolphe Max, mayor of Brussels; and the directors of the TRM. The gatherings brought leaders in domestic and colonial affairs into contact with those in the cultural and intellectual spheres. Given the inclusive character of the queen's gatherings, Paul Collaer's absence is particularly striking. He never appeared on the guest lists kept by Baron Traux de Wardin, nor in the catalogues of attendees in the society columns. Such an absence indicates Collaer's isolation from the circles of the political and social

⁶⁸For Le Bœuf's proposal, see "Note pour la Reine," 2 March 1921, FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/XXI/11/8. He proposed a production of Pergolesi's *La servante maîtresse* and Gluck's *Armide*, recycling the sets designed for the 1914 opening of the theater. In 1922, Le Bœuf tried again, proposing a performance of Monteverdi's *Couronnement de Poppée*, as the Concerts Régence, under the Concerts Populaires, were in the process of rehearsing the work for one of its concerts, with Claire Croiza in the title role. This proposal was also unsuccessful. Le Bœuf to Baron Traux de Wardin, "Aide Memoire," 6 November 1922. FHLB, Mus Ms. 4146/XXII/20/2.

⁶⁹A copy of the printed program is part of the ASRE, AE 822. The society column of *L'Eventail* reported that the queen organized all the details of the performance herself. "Mondanités. Les Cours," *L'Eventail*, 28 May 1922.

⁷⁰Many of the queen's regular guests hosted their own private salons. Reports on these gatherings appeared in *L'Eventail*. See, for instance, the report on Madame Jules Jacob's reception on 22 January 1925, which featured two Brahms trios and a work by Bach. The list of guests mirrors those of the queen. "Mondanités. Soirées musicales," *L'Eventail*, 1 February 1925. Among the most extravagant of the salons in Brussels was that of Adolphe and Suzanne Stoclet at their home on the Avenue de Terveuren. For more on their gatherings, see Michel Dumoulin, *Les Stoclet: microcosm d'ambitions et de passions* (Brussels: Le Cri, 2011); and Valérie Dufour, "A Passion for Music at the Stoclet House," in *Yearning for Beauty. The Wiener Werkstätte and the Stoclet House*, ed. Peter Noever et al. (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2006), 375–79.

elite, and may explain in part the bitterness he expressed about being excluded from planning musical events in the capital (see chapter 2).

Two contrasting circumstances surrounding performances at the Laeken theater, in 1928 and 1929 respectively, demonstrate the political and cultural significance of the court's musical programming. The first, a performance by the chorale La Légia, aligned with traditional court activities and was attributed to Elisabeth. The second, a staging of a Flemish-language translation of Igor Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat* (*De Geschiedenis van den Soldaat*) by the Vlaamsche Voolkstooneel (VVT), challenged all that the monarchy and the court stood for in Belgium, and the press generally attributed the invitation to the theater troupe to King Albert I.

The Queen's Concert: La Légia at the Château de Laeken

In his role as the Maître de la Chapelle de la Cour, Eugène Ysaÿe recommended the choral society La Légia to the queen for a performance in 1928 at Laeken as part of the group's tour of the nation in celebration of their seventy-fifth year. The men's choir, based in Walloon Liège, had enjoyed the official patronage of the royal family since it was founded by Théophile Vercken in 1853. It was one of the oldest and most prestigious of the many chorales and community bands open to amateurs from the bourgeoisie and working classes in Belgium. These groups performed regularly in their own cities and in regional and national competitions, and they embodied the type of social uplift through the arts that Belgian socialist, communist, and even conservative political parties advocated (see chapter 5 for more on the socialist projects for cultural uplift through musical performances). Some musical and artistic journals reported on these groups' performances, both in concert and in competition, side-by-side with reports on

professional performances and salon recitals.⁷¹ These groups participated in celebrations of national events, such as the annual celebration of Belgian independence on 21 July 1830.⁷² Their visibility at national ceremonies and representing Belgium in international competitions made these amateur groups an important, if peripheral, element in the conception of musical life in Brussels and in Belgium in the interwar years. They presented the opportunity for non-professional musicians to experience music as performers. In addition to its public performances, La Légia organized musical and literary gatherings that were reserved for its members. During his tenure as director, Sylvain Dupuis dedicated some of these gatherings to a theme, or a single modern composer. On 24 April 1887, for instance, a concert was dedicated to the works of Saint-Saëns, and on 19 March 1888, Dupuis organized a festival of César Franck's music. Before World War I, the chorale also toured internationally, with performances in France, Germany, and the Netherlands.⁷³ As part of a long Belgian tradition, and as a recipient of royal patronage, the chorale's performance at the Château de Laeken was unsurprising and politically unthreatening to the monarchy.

La Légia's program on 3 March 1928 was made up entirely of works by composers from Liège, drawing attention to the rich local tradition. It included Grétry's *Le Rossignol*, Jean-Théodor Radoux's *Vieilles chansons*, and Maurice Dambois's *Les Trois Capitaines*. According

⁷¹See, for instance, "Concours International pour Chœurs," *La Revue musicale belge* 1, no. 1 (May 1925): 12.

⁷²The tradition of chorales and community bands in Brussels was firmly in place before World War I. The annual listing of these groups for 1895 lists forty-seven in Brussels alone. Jules Dufrane, *Annuaire musical de la Belgique contenant l'histoire de toutes les sociétés musicales du royaume, la date de leur fondation, les noms des membres, l'adresse et locaux, etc.*, vol. 7 (Frameries: Dufrane-Friart, 1895).

⁷³José Quitin, "Le Retour de César Franck à Liège," *Revue belge de musicologie/ Belgisch tijdschrift voor muzikwetenschap* 45 (1991): 88–89.

to the *Journal de Liège*, the queen who had requested a program of Liégeois works.⁷⁴ The regionalist programming rooted the event in entirely Walloon and Francophone traditions, but the concert was described on national rather than regional terms in reviews. The slippage between Walloon cultural production and Belgian national identity, however, generated no specific commentary in the press, perhaps because French was the traditional language of the court. The equation of Walloon musical tradition with Belgian culture was indicative of the political and linguistic dynamics of the nation at the time, with support for the status quo coming from Wallonia, while most opposition toward the monarchy and the established administration system came from political groups in Flanders. In the first days of March, Belgian newspapers, both Francophone and Flemish, reported on the group's upcoming performance at court, but only a few very brief reviews appeared afterwards, with no emphasis on the program's partisan flavor.⁷⁵ These reviews resemble the many short reports of recitals at court, concentrating more on the gracious reception that the king and queen offered to the performers than on the music itself. Furthermore, these reports attributed the project to the queen, placing her firmly in the role of the female patron upholding the Belgian traditions of her husband's court.

Politics of Music at the King's Court: The Vlaamsche Volkstoneel at Laeken

Fifteen months later, however, a performance by the Brussels-based Vlaamsche Volkstoneel (VVT) at Laeken attracted intense scrutiny from the press. Because of the political implications,

⁷⁴Fl. Boons, "Une heure inoubliable. La 'Royale Légia' chante au château de Laeken," *Journal de Liège*, 5 March 1928.

⁷⁵For reports on La Légia's spring schedule for 1928, see "La 'Royale Légia,'" *La Libre Belgique*, 3 March 1928; "La 'Royal Légia' à Bruxelles," *La Nation belge*, 3 March 1928; "La 'Légia' au Château de Laeken," *Le Soir*, 3 March 1928; and *Het Laatste Nieuws*, 3 March 1928. For summaries of the concert, see R.T., "'La Légia' a chanté au Château de Laeken," *La Dernière heure*, 5 March 1928; *Le Journal de Charleroi*, 5 March 1928; and *La Libre Belgique*, 5 March 1928.

the event on 4 July 1929 was most often attributed to Albert rather than Elisabeth, even though the queen had taken charge of organizing the event. Responses to the VVT's production of a Flemish translation of Igor Stravinsky's *Histoire du Soldat* (*De Geschiedenis van den Soldaat*) shifted the rhetoric about musical life at the court away from the queen. This performance attracted more attention than any other musical gathering at the royal residence during the interwar period. Journalists supporting Flemish autonomy and those advocating for Belgian political unity alike read the performance of an avant-garde work by a foreign composer in Flemish translation at the French-speaking court as a significant event for their respective political positions. Following on the heels of Jules Destrée's 1929 *Compromis des Belges*, which rejected a separation of Flanders from Wallonia, protected linguistic minorities, and led to the re-emergence of debates over establishing an exclusively Flemish-language university, the VVT's performance at Laeken was a political statement as well as an artistic one.⁷⁶ With this production, music at the court entered an explicitly political, traditionally masculine debate, using a musical work by a foreigner, adapted by a Belgian, to do so.

The press linked the production explicitly with Albert's political activities. Unlike Elisabeth, who confined her activities after World War I to traditional patronage and charitable work, rarely expressing political opinions in public, the king involved himself with every aspect of political life of his nation. Beginning with his address to the reconvened Belgian Parliament in November 1918, the king laid out specific goals for Belgium to preserve the nation's unity and autonomy, including the creation of a Flemish-language university.⁷⁷ The king also worked

⁷⁶For more on the political developments of 1929, see chapter 4 in Els Witte, Jan Craeybeckx, and Alain Meynen, *Political History of Belgium from 1830 Onwards* (Brussels: Academic and Scientific Publishers, 2009).

⁷⁷The full text of the king's address appeared in "La réunion des Chambres: une séance historique," *Le Soir*, 23 November 1918. His proposal to transform the University of Ghent into a Flemish-language institution led to a long period of demonstrations and debates from Flemish-speaking and French-speaking populations. It was only after 1930 that instruction there was offered exclusively in Flemish.

closely with members of the socialist and communist parties in Belgium in a bid to protect the monarchy from political revolts that would undoubtedly have produced even more upheaval in Belgium. He tackled pressing social concerns, such as housing shortages and questions of expanded enfranchisement in the wake of World War I.⁷⁸ The VVT production fit more logically into Albert's political agendas than it did with Elisabeth's work as an impartial and apolitical representative of Belgian national interests. Throughout the interwar years, the press reinforced and perpetuated Elisabeth's official non-political position. *L'Eventail* reported, for instance, upon the queen's visit to Paris as a representative of Belgium at the César Franck celebrations in 1922:

Si elle est et demeure étrangère au gouvernement, à la politique, des tâches s'offrent à elle. Elle a rempli l'un d'elles avec passion, pendant la guerre: celle de soulager les souffrances; dans la paix, elle en remplit une autre qui répond, d'ailleurs à ces goûts: celle de rappeler que l'Art, en ce pays qui lui doit tant de gloire, est une des forces de la nation, une de celles dont on s'enorgueillit. Un tel rôle convient à la femme assise sur le trône.⁷⁹

Even in 1964, Charles d'Ydewalle perpetuated the image of a queen who was both uninvolved and unperturbed by the political strife that surrounded her: "Les remous parlementaires, les changements de ministères, la nervosité flamand et ouvrière, tout ceci paraît n'avoir joué aucun rôle dans la vie imperturbablement continue de cette souveraine."⁸⁰

The organization of the VVT performance directly contradicted d'Ydewalle's portrait of the queen, as the theater company's activities directly responded to the political and cultural conflict that stemmed from the deep divide between Flanders and Wallonia. Jan Oscar De Gruyter founded the VVT in 1920 as a vehicle for the defense of Flemish language and culture in

⁷⁸For more on these unlikely collaborations between the king and the socialist and communist parties, see Janet Polasky, *The Democratic Socialism of Emile Vandervelde: Between Reform and Revolution* (Washington DC: Berg, 1995); and Jacques Willequet, *Albert I^{er}, roi des Belges: un portrait politique et humain* (Paris: J.-P. Delarge, 1979).

⁷⁹"Notes de la semaine," *L'Eventail*, 12 March 1922.

⁸⁰D'Ydewalle, *Elisabeth de Belgique*, 189.

Belgium.⁸¹ Each season, the company presented new Flemish plays and major international works in Flemish translation in Flanders and Brussels. As political activists, Johan de Meester and Jan Boon, De Gruyter's successors in the late 1920s, aimed to appeal to a broad audience with their productions. Stravinsky's artistic goal of reaching the masses without sacrificing his artistic integrity aligned with their views. *L'Histoire du soldat*, with its sophisticated musical language, its allegorical subject, and linguistic structure, was particularly appealing.⁸² *De Geschiedenis van den Soldaat* premiered at the PBA on 29 December 1928, featuring leading Belgian musicians, including violinist Alphonse Onnou and the Pro Arte ensemble conducted by Arthur Prévost.⁸³

For the 1928–29 program, Jan Boon wrote a brief essay on Stravinsky, the relationship between the drama and the incidental music, and the work's place in the artistic trajectory of the twentieth century:

This 'story' emerged from the war. The basest actions of men at the time created a poverty in all art. Yet at no time has our world been in such a great need of art. Thus, Stravinsky invented the form of *De Geschiedenis van den Soldaat*: a reader of medieval mystery plays, he placed the audience so close to the dramatic action that the spectator can sympathize with the tragic moments that unfold in the drama of the scene, following the story with all his heart. And his music is the reader's helper. Its main interest is that

⁸¹In 1922, de Gruyter left the VVT to become director of the Koninklijke Nederlandse Schouwburg in Antwerp. For more, see Walter Gobbers's article in *La Biographie Nationale*, vol. 35 (Brussels: Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts, 1969), 318–25.

⁸²Marinus Nijhoff provided the VVT with the Flemish translation of the work. At least two copies of the script used by the VVT in the 1928–29 season survive: in the Fonds Paul Collaer, KBR, Mus. 17.046 A; and director Johan van Meester's copy, with annotations, staging diagrams, and musical cues, Archief van het Vlaamsche Volkstoneel (AvVVT), KADOC, Documentatie-en Onderzoekscentrum voor Religie, Cultuur en Samenleving, Leuven, Belgium, 2.4.4.34. Valérie Dufour examines the ways in which the Flemish translation of the text for this production preserved the popular register of the language, which accounted for some of the work's appeal to audiences throughout Flanders in *Stravinsky à Bruxelles 1920–1960* (Brussels: Académie Royale de Belgique, 2003), 79–85.

⁸³Paul Collaer served as one of the intermediaries between the VVT and the musicians of the Pro Arte in the fall of 1928. His letters to director Jan Boon about organizing the ensemble that would perform with the VVT throughout the 1928–29 season are housed in the AvVVT, , 2.2.1.7. *De Geschiedenis van de Soldaat* was part of a double-bill, along with a Flemish translation by Adriaan Hooykaas of Jean Cocteau's *Orphéus*, with incidental music by the Belgian composer Karel Albert. Program for 1928–29 season of the VVT, AvVVT, 2.4.4.34.

gives insight into the story. Only in drama could Stravinsky surpass the trembling of an ordinary day at war. And only music could render it powerless.⁸⁴

The season's program booklet also included an essay by composer Karel Albert on Stravinsky.

From its first performance in Brussels, and throughout its tour across Belgium in the winter of 1929, *De Geschiedenis van den Soldaat* enjoyed generally positive reviews from the press.⁸⁵ An unsigned review in the Catholic journal *La Libre Belgique*, for instance, proclaimed that the production's success was a testament to the refined taste and independence of the theater troupe.⁸⁶

Although the press had already engaged with both the translation and the production during the season, the circumstances of the performance at Laeken in July drew a new flurry of responses in the Belgian newspapers. Writers pondered the significance and the political implications of inviting a Flemish populist group to perform at the palace. Their evaluations

⁸⁴“Zoo is deze ‘Geschiedenis’ ontstaan uit den oorlog. Uit allerlei armoe was de kunst toentertijd verschoven naar het laagste plan van de aandacht der menschen en toch was er wellicht geen tijd over onze wereld gewenteld die zoo geweldig behoefte had aan kunst. Stravinsky verzoon deze vorm voor “de histoire”: de voorlezer die naar het gebruik der middeleeuwsche mysteriespelen het drama verhaalt en door zijn plastiek den toeschouwer zoo dicht naar de dramatische handeling toehaalt dat hij met geheel rijen hart de zielige momenten kan meeleven die openbloemen in het volle drama der tooneel tjes, tusschen het verhaal van den voorlezer elkaar opvolgend. En de muziek heeft hij gewild als de sterke helpster van den voorlezer. Anders niet: zijn inzicht was het om het hoofdbelang te geven aan het verhaal, het drama. Alleen het drama vond Strawinsky in oorlogstijd bij machte om de menigte de ontroering te geven zoo hevig dat zij de sidderingen van den gewonen oorlogsdag overtreffen kon. De muziek alleen, achtte hij daartoe machteloos.” Jan Boon, “Iets over ‘De Geschiedenis van den Soldaat,’” VVT program 1928–29 season, AvVVT, 2.4.4.34.

⁸⁵The VVT performed in Ghent, Mechelen, Louvain, Bruges, Antwerp, and Courtrai before returning to the PBA in Brussels at the end of June. “Au Palais des Beaux-Arts,” *Le Soir*, 29 June 1929. See also Dufour, *Stravinsky à Bruxelles*, 83. For reviews of the production, see, for instance, *Het Laatste Nieuws*, 24 December 1928, in which the author concludes: “Het is een spektakel dat misschlen weinig het gemoed roert maar des te dieper dringt den geest” (It is a production that stimulates the mind a bit, but stirs the soul deeply) (D., “Het Vlaamsche Volkstooneel. Optreden in het Paleis van Schoone Kunsten”). The Belgian premiere of the work in the original French, given at the third Concert Pro Arte, on 17 January 1923, did not receive unanimous praise. See, for instance, May de Rudder's negative review of the concert (“Musique,” *L'Eventail*, 21 January 1923). Despite the cool reception in 1923, the work was programmed regularly between the wars: it was performed again at the Pro Arte on 15 March 1926 and 25 December 1927; Marguerite Akarova, who danced the part of the princess for the VVT production, returned to the role for a performance at the PBA on 3 April 1930 and three years later by the Société Philharmonique on 18 December 1933.

⁸⁶*La Libre Belgique*, 19 January 1929.

aligned closely with the partisan agendas of their journals. Three conflicting positions emerged from the many reports in the French- and Flemish-language press: Francophone nationalists saw it as a sign of the monarchy's success in uniting the country; the Flemish nationalist press viewed it with a mix of cautious optimism and suspicion; and the Francophone Walloon press framed it as a shocking political statement that effectively condoned a movement working for the dissolution of a united Belgium.

Writing for *La Nation Belge*, Ernest Closson was one of only a handful of critics who sidestepped the political implications of the performance, choosing to concentrate on the aesthetic qualities of the work. Skepticism about the audience follows his praise for the performance itself, however. The music “fut écouté religieusement et vivement applaudie,” but:

Fut-elle [la représentation] comprise et appréciée de tous les assistants, dont beaucoup ne connaissent peut-être de Stravinsky que l'*Oiseau de Feu* ou d'autres spécimens de sa première manière? Peu importe. L'essentiel était qu'ils prissent [sic] contact avec cette partition extraordinaire, spécimen caractéristique de la musique d'aujourd'hui, et il faut se réjouir de l'esprit résolument moderne qui dirige nos Souverains dans leurs goûts artistiques.⁸⁷

Le Vingtième Siècle, a Catholic nationalist newspaper, framed the VVT performance as a sign of the monarchy's dedication to encouraging a flourishing Flemish culture within a politically unified nation. The day after the performance, the journal printed a report by Marcel Schmidt, who echoed Closson's praise for the royal family's artistic liberalism. Unlike Closson, however, he hinted at the political significance of the performance. He declared the performance a triumph for Flemish culture, describing the company as

⁸⁷Ernest Closson, “Chronique théâtrale. Théâtre du Château de Laeken. ‘L’Histoire du Soldat’ de Stravinsky,” *La Nation belge*, 5 July 1929. See also Leon Botstein, “Music and Its Public: Habits of Listening and the Crisis of Musical Modernism in Vienna, 1870–1914” (Ph.D. diss, Harvard University, 1985). Botstein describes the phenomenon of indiscriminate enthusiasm for new music growing out of “embarrassment stemming from a self-conscious sense of ignorance.” (np)

le centre vivant et agissant, le lieu géométrique où se peut le mieux ramener et mesurer l'effort admirable, qui se poursuit en ce moment de toutes parts en pays flamand, à la conquête de l'art moderne, d'un art qui ne soit pas seulement consacré à exalter les souvenirs d'un passé glorieux, mais qui puisse aussi se hausser à la taille des grandeurs futures.

Schmidt concluded by stating that the royal family's invitation to the VVT foreshadowed the nation's continued cultural development in the years to come.⁸⁸ In an article later that month, the editors of *Le Vingtième Siècle* used more specific terms, arguing that that only through the collaboration and equal treatment of the Flemish and Walloon cultures would Belgium continue to develop, casting the performance in positive terms as one of the many manifestations of the king's ongoing support for the Flemish cause.⁸⁹ Likewise, a review in the conservative intellectual *Pourquoi Pas?* supported the initiative of bringing a Flemish-language production to the court: "La Belgique étant bilingue, il importait que son bilinguisme fût consacré dans les salons, et dans le plus grand de tous."⁹⁰ This position mirrored that of other articles in the journal following the uneasy agreement that the Flemish and Walloons reached over the question of language in the administrative spheres in the spring of 1929. However, *Pourquoi Pas?* continued by chastising the Flemish daily *De Standaard* for its coverage of the event, pointing out that its report only listed the Flemish speaking guests—and none of the French speaking or bilingual ones—and also failed to mention the free interchanges between the Flemish and French at the reception afterwards, both oversights indicative of the Vlaamsche Landbond agenda to crush the

⁸⁸Maurice Schmidt, "Le 'Vlaamsche Volkstooneel' au château de Laeken. A la conquête d'un art moderne," *Le Vingtième siècle*, 7 July 1929. The newspaper also published a short report on the concert on 5 July 1929 ("Le 'Vlaamsche Volkstooneel' joue devant la Famille Royale au Château de Laeken").

⁸⁹"La Presse Belge," *Le Vingtième siècle*, 16 July 1929.

⁹⁰"A Laeken," *Pourquoi pas?* 12 July 1929.

Francophone minority in Flanders.⁹¹ The author took the opportunity to comment upon the infiltration of political bias into all aspects of the Flemish paper's reporting.

In contrast to the Walloon nationalist reviews extolling the quality of the production, and more importantly its significance in the ongoing struggle to unify the nation, the Flemish nationalist press approached the performance with more caution. *De Schelde*, for example, reported with some satisfaction that many important representatives of Flemish culture were invited to the event, framing it as a praise-worthy effort on the royal family's part. But the paper also admonished the court for sending these Flemings invitations in French rather than in their mother tongue.⁹² A second article in *De Schelde* also approached the question of royal support of Flemish cultural initiatives guardedly, interpreting the VVT production as a sign of goodwill from the monarchy, but insisting that there was still much to be accomplished before Flemish and French-speaking organizations would find themselves on equal footing in terms of funding and status.⁹³ The reviewer for *Vlaanderen* was even more pessimistic. He considered the VVT's appearance at the court just one of many examples of superficial support of Flemish interests by the Belgian central government. With ironic disdain, he dismissed the performance at Laeken as a "Belgian apotheosis." He also drew one of the few direct connections between the VVT production and Elisabeth, scoffing at the programming choice of a French work translated into Flemish, rather than a native Flemish play, for the "Belgian queen and her Francophone entourage."⁹⁴ Despite the political initiatives for linguistic equality in this period, the Belgian

⁹¹"Et la Flandre?" and "Le buffet," *Pourquoi pas?* 12 July 1929.

⁹²"Het Vlaamsche Volkstooneel an Het Hof," *De Schelde*, 6 July 1929. In fact, the invitations for the VVT performance were bilingual. Jan Boon's invitation is part of the AvVVT, 2.4.5.8.

⁹³Spectator, "Vlaamsche Kunstenaars aan het Hof. En nog niet tevreden!" *De Schelde*, 12 July 1929.

⁹⁴"Belgische apotheose," "voor der Belgen koningin en haar franschgezinden aanhang." "Kleine kroniek. Om de Vlaming zoet te houden," *Vlaanderen*, 13 July 1929.

court remained Francophone, and French continued to be the language of the aristocracy, the haute bourgeoisie, and the intellectuals. Flemish nationalists often referred to this linguistic dominance in their arguments for the dissolution of the monarchy.⁹⁵

The most cutting criticism of the VVT production on political grounds came from the anticlerical Walloon paper, *La Dernière heure*. A review framed the evening as a reprehensible political event, given that—as the author put it—the VVT “toujours un instrument de propagande contre la Belgique.” He found it to be incomprehensible that “on ait pu inviter le ‘Vlaamsche Volkstooneel’ à la Cour pour y représenter une des pièces de son répertoire—une pièce qui n’est même pas flamande.”⁹⁶ To make matters worse, Staaf Bruggen, who played the part of the soldier, was a known Flemish activist. The same guest list that *De Schelde* highlighted as a sign of a small triumph for Flemish culture, proved to be for *La Dernière Heure* a scandal, as it included several other well-known Flemish activists and writers, many of whom had campaigned for Flemish political and cultural independence during the war, including Cyrillus Buysse, Ernest Claes, Paul Kenis, and Reinaart de Vos.⁹⁷

The VVT’s performance at the Château de Laeken in the summer of 1929 remained an isolated event. It was the only Flemish-language production among the numerous gatherings at Laeken, and the names of the Flemish nationalists who attend the performance did not appear on

⁹⁵For more on the importance of French to the Belgian bourgeoisie, see Suzanne Lilar, *Une enfance gantoise* (Paris: Grasset, 1976). In her memoirs, Marie-José recalled her frustration over not speaking Flemish as a child and a young woman in Belgium. She insisted that her own children speak Italian so that they could communicate with their subjects. See Adriaenssen, *Marie-José*, 104.

⁹⁶“Que Signifie?” *La Dernière heure*, 6 July 1929.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*; Guest list for 4 July 1929, ASRE, AE 882. There are some discrepancies between the lists of attendees that *La Dernière heure* provides and the guest lists in the queen’s archives.

any other royal invitation lists. Furthermore, the press resumed its depictions of musical activities at the court as the queen's realm.⁹⁸

The theater company continued to produce seasons through the 1930s. Their programs included such works as Paul Claudel's *La Ville* (*De Stad*—translated by Urbain Van de Voorde with incidental music by Karel Albert) and Karel Albert's *Annonce Faite à Marie*, based on Paul Claudel's play. Their performances in Brussels took place at the Salle Patria, as well as throughout Belgium but never again in a space such as Laeken, which was steeped in the monarchist and Francophone version of Belgian national identity.⁹⁹

Patronage as Identity Marker: The Fondation Musicale Reine Elisabeth

The VVT performance at Laeken marked the first gathering of the queen's partners in her new venture, the Fondation Musicale Reine Elisabeth.¹⁰⁰ The foundation, run by a group of Elisabeth's intimate acquaintances, folded many of the activities that the queen had undertaken on in the 1920s into an official organization. Elisabeth's position as queen and her work through the Fondation Musicale blurred the distinction between the public and private spheres. Between 1929 and 1934, the queen took an active part in raising and distributing funds. The foundation

⁹⁸The VVT continued to operate until 1932. Correspondence about the preparations for the 1929–30 season highlights the success of the Stravinsky production. A letter to Milhaud dated 20 April 1929 (before the Queen's performance), emphasizes the theater's capacity to perform new works. The letter proposes a production of Milhaud's *Protée*, translated into Flemish, with a modified orchestration to allow for the theater troupe's projected tour through Belgium, as well as to the Netherlands and Germany. Administration of the VVT to Darius Milhaud, AvVVT, 2.4.1.24.

⁹⁹See, for instance, Administration of the VVT to Yvan Lenain, 24 October 1930 confirming their reservation of the Salle Patria in Brussels in January 1931 for a performance of Paul Claudel's *La Ville* (translated as *De Stad*). AvVVT, 2.4.4.49. The VVT collection also includes a poster in French advertising this production at the Salle Patria. The description of the performance indicates that it would be bilingual—with a reading of excerpts of Claudel's text in the original French followed by a complete performance of the Flemish translation.

¹⁰⁰The list of guests for the VVT performance includes many names connected to the queen's new foundation, including presidents of the local chapters in Luxembourg, Hainaut, and Brabant. See guest list for 4 July 1929, ASRE, AE 882.

sponsored public performances by young Belgian musicians, subsidized publications of new Belgian works, and funded international travel to promote Belgian music abroad. It raised funds through benefit concerts given by visiting international artists, including Ignacy Paderewski. This new organization brought together many of the people in Brussels—musicians, organizers, and financial backers—who had supported the flourishing musical life in the city since the end of the war. These included Baron Victor Buffin de Chosal, Henry Le Bœuf, Eugène Ysaÿe, and Charles Houdret. The foundation was a Belgian initiative based in Brussels, with a nationalist agenda, but its strong cosmopolitan viewpoint mirrored the philosophies of Le Bœuf’s Société Philharmonique and Corneil de Thoran’s directorship at the Monnaie. Although it was a national organization, with administrators assigned to each province, the bulk of its activity took place in Brussels.¹⁰¹

The fledgling foundation, which Eugène Ysaÿe had started as the Comité d’Edition et de Propagande pour l’Art Musical, was renamed Fondation Musicale Reine Elisabeth in May 1929. Its goal was “favoriser le développement de la musique nationale et d’aider les musiciens belges.”¹⁰² The queen herself invested 100,000 Belgian francs in the project.¹⁰³ This sum was the equivalent of the Société Philharmonique’s expenditures for each year between 1931 and 1935.¹⁰⁴ Its mission encompassed four objectives: the publication of new Belgian works; the creation of a lending program for instruments, scores, and musicological works; institution of

¹⁰¹ Among the foundation’s initiatives was a 1931 performance of Belgian composer Marcel Quinet’s *Mouvements* at the Oxford festival. In 1932, the Quatuor de Bruxelles traveled to Paris to give two concerts sponsored by Elisabeth’s organization. Yves Nat traveled to Paris on a scholarship from the foundation to study with Jacques Thibaud (“Le Quatuor de Bruxelles,” *Le Ménestrel*, 29 April 1932).

¹⁰² Michel Stockhem, *La Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth* (Paris: Duclot, 1993), 16.

¹⁰³ “Une Initiative de la Reine. La Fondation Musicale Reine Elisabeth,” *L’Indépendance belge*, 8 June 1929.

¹⁰⁴ See Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 259. For further comparison, in 1929, a single membership to the Cercle Artistique et Littéraire cost 300 francs.

scholarships for study and travel; and formation of subventions to fund concerts that would contribute to the dissemination of Belgian music at home and abroad.¹⁰⁵ The best-known project that the Fondation Reine Elisabeth oversaw was the Concours Musical Eugène Ysaÿe, which became the Concours Musical Reine Elisabeth after World War II.¹⁰⁶ But before the first of these competitions took place in 1937, the foundation had an important role in shaping the musical life at the royal residence, in Brussels, and in Belgium in the early 1930s.

The foundation promoted cosmopolitanism in Belgian musical life, primarily by sending Belgian musicians abroad for study and for concert tours. For example, violinist Carlo Van Neste received a scholarship to study in Paris with Jacques Thibaud, who performed regularly for the queen. Cellist Marcel Quinet, and composer Albert Huybrechts also received scholarships to study abroad. Upon their return to Belgium, each became an important part of the musical life in Brussels. Van Neste and Quinet both had successful careers as concert musicians, and Huybrechts taught composition at the Conservatoire de Bruxelles. Musicians who went abroad on concert tours supported by the foundation also enjoyed success, and perhaps received more attention from the foreign press due to the source of their financial support. For example, the queen's organization funded the tour of the Quatuor Belge à Clavier to Berlin, Vienna, and Warsaw in 1931 after the ensemble's residence at the Conservatory of Athens.¹⁰⁷ The following year, the foundation funded concerts to be given in Berlin by the Trio de la Cour as part of an exhibition of Belgian art in Berlin. On 11 and 14 April of the same year, the Quatuor de

¹⁰⁵“Musique,” *Le Soir*, 7 July 1929.

¹⁰⁶Many studies tell the story of this part of the competition. See, for instance, Thierry Bouckaert, *Le rêve d'Elisabeth: cinquante ans du Concours Reine Elisabeth* (Brussels: Complexe, 2001); Pierre Delhasse, *Musique et passion: le Concours Reine Elisabeth des origines à aujourd'hui* (Brussels: Le Cri, 1985); Georges Dumortier, *Une petite musique de reine: d'Eugène Ysaÿe à la télévision, la chronique du concours Reine Elisabeth de Belgique, 1924–1991* (Brussels: RTBF Bruxelles, 1991); and Michel Stockhem, *La Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth*.

¹⁰⁷“Musique,” *Le Soir*, 27 December 1931.

Bruxelles (Desclin, Delvenne, Van Shepdael, and Fischers) gave two concerts in Paris featuring works by Beethoven, Mozart, Quinet, and Houdret. The Paris-based Belgian critic Arthur Hoérée concluded his review of the performances with a homage to the queen's project to support young musicians: "Si la Belgique est une pépinière de virtuoses de l'archet, il faut aussi se souvenir que la Reine, elle-même violoniste, est une grande amie de la musique et qu'elle a créé une institution musicale de la plus haute importance."¹⁰⁸ In each case, these musicians and groups returned to Belgium to continue their careers, often cultivating the foreign connections that they established during their time abroad to enrich their work in Brussels.

Brussels also saw a wide range of performances that drew upon the queen's cosmopolitan vision. The first benefit concert to support the foundation took place on 4 September 1929 at the Palais des Beaux-Arts. The gala performance by singers from La Scala, conducted by Pietro Mascagni, included opera excerpts in the first half, and an unstaged performance of *Cavalleria Rusticana* in the second.

The queen also organized a series of concerts at court funded by her foundation during the 1931–1932 season. The six concerts by the Quatuor Pro Arte, the Quatuor Belge à Clavier, the Trio de la Cour, the Quatuor de Bruxelles, and the Quatuor de Liège were all given at the theater in Laeken.¹⁰⁹ These concerts served several purposes: in addition to giving the musicians a place to perform, they also brought them in contact with the elite group who attended the queen's gatherings and who often organized similar concerts at their own homes. A guest list for the second concert in this series reveals the importance of the people who attended the queen's

¹⁰⁸Arthur Hoérée, "Quatuor de Bruxelles," *Le Ménestrel*, 28 April 1932.

¹⁰⁹The dates of the concerts were: 23 December 1931, 20 January 1932, 16 February 1932, 15 March 1932, and 29 April 1932. The Groupe instrumentale de Bruxelles gave a concert at the Château de Laeken on 20 February 1932, but this concert was not part of the series for the Fondation Musicale Reine Elisabeth. See ASRE, AE 822.

concerts for the continued success of the foundation and her commitment to use her social ties to further Belgian art. It described the ways in which some of the guests to this concert could help promote or had already helped promote the Fondation Musicale Reine Elisabeth at home and abroad. W. E. Martin of London, for instance, had secured two subscriptions from the *Compagnie Anglaise Liebig*, of which he was the president. Irwin Schwerke of the *Chicago Tribune* was a possible link to the United States who could help arrange concerts of Belgian musicians there. Likewise, Arthur Hoérée's writing for *La Revue musicale* could be "très utile à la Fondation."¹¹⁰

With the foundation's enriching Belgian musical life and plans for the new violin competition in development, Elizabeth's ever-expanding role as patron became increasingly central to the configuration of Belgian musical life. What had started as the dream of a crown princess who hoped to recreate some of the vitality of Munich's musical scene in Brussels had become institutionalized as royal patronage through the foundation. The queen continued to pursue her vast correspondence with musicians, her duties at major artistic events, and her private predilections as a music lover.

In February of 1934, however, the queen's situation changed dramatically. Albert I died in a mountaineering accident at Marches-les-Dames, and Léopold III, Elisabeth's son, ascended to the throne. The queen herself did not attend the funeral and disappeared from public view. Charles d'Ydewalle recalled: "Nous eûmes tous l'impression que la reine, en février 1934, était reine morte et que la mort de son mari avait mis fin à ses jours."¹¹¹ Léopold's wife, Astrid,

¹¹⁰Guest list for 20 January 1932 concert (Quatour Belge à Clavier), ASRE, AE 822.

¹¹¹D'Ydewalle, *Elisabeth de Belgique*, 207.

replaced Elisabeth as Queen of the Belgians. Elisabeth no longer had an official role in the government.¹¹² Elisabeth left the Château de Laeken for the smaller Château de Stuyvenburg.

Elisabeth's foundation continued to function, but the private musical gatherings she had instituted at royal court ended, as Astrid did not demonstrate a particular interest in the musical life of the court or the city. As queen mother, Elisabeth continued to be involved with the foundation and competition that bore her name, yet her engagement with both endeavors was limited, compared with her intense personal involvement during her time as queen. She intervened from time to time, consulted with the members of the administration of her two organizations, and faithfully attended concerts, but it was the queen's name rather than her involvement that ensured the organizations' successes. By 1937, the foundation's main focus was the Concours Eugène Ysaÿe, the predecessor of the post-war Concours Musical International Reine Elisabeth. As the most recognizable facet of the queen's enduring legacy as a patron of the arts, the competition brought the most promising young violinists from around the world to play for a jury made up of world-renowned performers. Elisabeth attended each installment of the competition up until her death in 1965, when Queen Fabiola accepted the role of official patron. Fabiola was the official patron of the competition until December of 2013, when she passed the role to Queen Mathilde.¹¹³

Elisabeth's royal patronage was a central facet of musical life in the Belgian capital; it points both to class and to gender differences between Collaer, Le Bœuf, and De Thoran as urban businessmen and the queen as a royal spouse. For all her own agency and achievements as a concert organizer, arbiter of taste, and national figurehead, Elisabeth's position as patron was

¹¹²At the invitation of the king and queen of Italy, Elisabeth and her mother, Marie-José of Portugal, spent several months at a country estate near Naples after Albert's death.

¹¹³“La Reine Fabiola arrête le concours Reine Elisabeth,” *Le Soir*, 20 December 2013.

defined by the social and political rank she had assumed through her marriage. Her Renaissance models would have understood that hers was a borrowed power and reflected glory that would vanish with her husband. As I have shown, Elisabeth's contribution of Belgian music added layers of complexity to the activities of her three fellow patrons because—as a symbolic figure at the interstices of the political and the individual, as well as the national and the cosmopolitan—the music-loving “nurse queen” forged, for almost two decades, the kind of cosmopolitan national identity in her persona that they sought in their own activities. Her archives and the other documentary traces I have discussed reveal how consistently, consciously, and passionately she pursued this agenda.

CHAPTER 5: THE PALAIS DES BEAUX-ARTS AND THE CENTRALIZATION OF MUSICAL LIFE UNDER HENRY LE BŒUF

Henry Le Bœuf, by all accounts, was the consummate businessman: always immaculately turned-out, cool, and collected, allowing little room for displays of emotion. After the inauguration of the sculpture hall in the Palais des Beaux-Arts (PBA), however, he retreated to his office with a circle of friends, where he “ne sut plus maîtriser son émotion, matérialisée par quelques larmes mêlées à une chaude accolade. Il était heureux, et ne le cachait pas.”¹ On 4 May 1928, the building was as yet not completed; the chamber music hall and the main concert hall were still under construction. Separate inaugurations would take place in the following months for each. But the opening of the unfinished arts center gave Le Bœuf the first taste of success in a project into which he had invested almost a decade of planning.²

By the end of its first full season, the PBA had become the center of cultural, and especially musical, activity in Brussels. Throughout the 1930s, the Société Philharmonique, which was under Le Bœuf’s directorship and closely affiliated with the PBA, asserted a centralizing authority over other musical organizations in the city. The society became the leader not only of symphonic concerts, but also chamber music concerts and recitals. Staged

¹Victor Horta, *Mémoires*, ed. Cécile Delière (Brussels: L. Thiriar Laruelle et P. Laruelle, 1985), 266. Horta’s three-volume memoir, which he began to write in 1939, ends abruptly in the middle of his section on the creation of the Palais des Beaux-Arts. In 1941, Horta returned to the project, focusing on the period between 1894 and 1906. The manuscript, which was unfinished in 1947 when Horta died, was collected by Jean Delhaye, and is housed at the Musée Horta in Brussels. For more on the history of Horta’s memoirs and his archives, see Cécile Dulière, Introduction to Horta, *Mémoires*, xi–xvii and xxxiii–xxxiv.

²During his 1930 visit to Brussels, Prokofiev wrote of Le Bœuf’s preoccupation with the PBA: “Le Bœuf is a charming and interesting man, but his sole topic of conversation was his new hall, which is indeed a triumph.” Sergey Prokofiev, *Diaries 1924–1933. Prodigal Son*, trans. and ed. Anthony Phillips (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 942.

productions of new music also took place at the PBA, rather than at the TRM. Le Bœuf had the means to realize fully his conception of the “vie musicale” in Brussels through the PBA and the Société Philharmonique, developed during his years as a music critic in the nineteenth century, and implemented partially through his work with the Concerts Populaires in the 1920s (see Chapter 2). In fact, architect Victor Horta speculated that Le Bœuf’s interest in the PBA project was almost exclusively a musical one, and that Le Bœuf agreed to participate in the project in order to facilitate the creation of a new concert hall dedicated exclusively to musical performance.³ Le Bœuf predicated his concept of the “vie musicale” in Brussels on three main goals: to establish an international flair in Brussels’s music making; to educate; and to create a nationalist flavor through rhetoric—if not practice—by supporting the performance of new Belgian works. Through his administration of musical organizations, Le Bœuf planned that his conception of a musical life would project itself upon the rest of the city, thereby making his individual musical ambitions universal. In this way, he could control and direct the profile of the city’s reputation as a musical center. The PBA, unfettered by ties to pre-war organizations and limitations on performing space offered the ideal location for Le Bœuf to put these principals into practice.

This chapter demonstrates how Le Bœuf’s vision of musical life in Brussels became synonymous with the mission of the PBA as a center for the arts, and how the artistic vision of the PBA and the Société Philharmonique came to define the city as a whole. The process of equating a personal vision with an institutional mission, and an institutional mission with a civic identity, however, was a problematic—and at times traumatic—process for the the city. Le Bœuf’s influence at the PBA was far reaching, and his death in 1935 exposed the fraught relationships among individual, institutional, and civic visions of the city’s musical life. The

³Horta, *Mémoires*, 241.

centralization of the city's musical life under the Société Philharmonique rested on the same masterful administrative skills that Le Bœuf had relied upon to shape the Concerts Populaires, but more importantly, the project and its many facets relied on a constant element of theatricality, from the planning of the project to the construction of the building to the execution of concert seasons. Furthermore, this chapter shows how the internationalism of Le Bœuf's musical vision, in which Belgium was situated within a larger cosmopolitan complex of urban musical centers defined the PBA.

Artistic Optimism and the Creation of the PBA

Throughout the 1920s, expectations for the PBA were high. Le Bœuf and his team at the Concerts Populaires were instrumental in encouraging a sense of optimism for the future of Belgian music at the new center. Letters to composers and notices in the press indicated their anticipation of an explosion of concerts with the expanded resources that the new concert halls would offer. Before the PBA was built, concert space was limited: the Concerts Populaires conducted rehearsals for their concerts in the foyer of the TRM; the acoustics and size of the auditorium at the Conservatoire were less than ideal; and other spaces, such as the Salle Patria, Salle de l'Union Coloniale, and Salle Delgay were reserved for smaller concerts. In July 1927, Belgian composer Armand Marsick, who had just returned to Belgium after a five-year appointment as the director of the conservatory in Bilbao, wrote to Le Bœuf of his disappointment that his music would not be included in the 1927–28 Concerts Populaires season. In his response, Le Bœuf assured Marsick: “Lorsque Bruxelles pourra disposer d’une nouvelle salle (Palais des Beaux-Arts), il est certain qu’il sera beaucoup plus facile d’organiser un plus

grand nombre de concerts et, pour vous, de trouver la bonne occasion que vous ambitionnez.”⁴

Le Bœuf made a similar promise to Albert Dupuis, writing that with the opening of the grand hall at the PBA, restrictions on the number of performances forced by limited concert space would disappear.⁵ The implication in these letters is clear: more concert space would lead to more opportunities for Belgian composers’ music.

Although these letters to composers from the mid- and late-1920s concentrate on the vital importance of expanded concert space, they do not discuss the larger mission of the fledgling PBA. The quest for a thriving culture of diverse and international programming for Brussels had been in place since the beginning of the project’s conception. Despite the claim by the PBA’s directors that their mission to provide a space open to a wide variety of artistic endeavors where the general public could learn and expand its horizons was innovative, however, the PBA had many precursors.⁶ Over the span of forty years at the end of the nineteenth-century, the first Palais des Beaux-Arts, a variety of elite concert spaces, and two headquarters for the socialist Parti Ouvrier Belge operated within a kilometer of the site for the new Palais des Beaux-Arts.⁷ Architect Alphonse Balat’s Palais des Beaux-Arts on the Rue de la Régence (now the Musée d’Art Ancien), was completed in 1887, and hosted the concerts and expositions of Les XX and

⁴Henry Le Bœuf to Armand Marsick, 14 July 1927. Fonds Henry Le Bœuf (FHLB), Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique/ Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België (KBR), Mus. Ms. 4147/IX/46/8.

⁵Henry Le Bœuf to Albert Dupuis, 15 November 1926. FHLB, Mus. Ms. 4147/VI/29/69.

⁶Horta cites the first Palais des Beaux-Arts, designed by Alphonse Balat: “si la conception d’un Palais des Beaux-Arts avec salle de concert [...] était entrée dans mon programme générale d’études personnelles, c’était pas en raison d’un intérêt architectural spécial imaginé par moi ou complaisamment demandé par d’autres, c’était le souvenir du Palais des Beaux-Arts de Balat, salles d’exposition et salle de concert à la fois, dont tout en étant un succès à l’inauguration, l’usage musical été supprimé.” Horta, *Mémoires*, 234.

⁷Roland Van Der Hoeven’s work on multifunctional spaces in Brussels focuses on the function of these spaces in the fabric of nineteenth-century intellectual and social organization. His work is part of the MICM-Arc research initiative at the Université Libre de Bruxelles to examine the cultural dynamics of the urban space of Brussels from the eighteenth century to the present. “Lieux de spectacle à Bruxelles, aux 19e et 20e siècles,” lecture, Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Brussels, 25 March 2013.

La Libre Esthétique in the decades before the war. As such, it was a center of the modernist movement linking visual, decorative, and musical arts in the pre-war years.

When the first Maison du Peuple, completed in 1886, proved to be too small for the purposes of the Parti Ouvrier Belge, Horta was commissioned to build a larger facility at the edge of the working-class Marolles district. His design included a hall for lectures and concerts, modeled after principles he learned by visiting the Festspielhaus in Bayreuth.⁸ The Section d'Art at the Maison du Peuple, directed by Lallah Vandervelde (wife of socialist leader Emile Vandervelde), organized a series of concerts and lectures aimed at cultural uplift for the workers whom the Parti Ouvrier Belge served. The chamber concerts that the Section d'Art organized, however, did not necessarily attract the intended working-class audiences. Instead, evidence in the press suggests that the same audience of the intellectual elite and bourgeoisie who frequented more exclusive gatherings made up the majority of the concert-goers at the Maison du Peuple.⁹

Other smaller spaces dedicated to offering audiences an array of cultural experiences before World War I included the Maison d'Art, directed by Edmond Picard at his home near the Porte de Namur; the Salle Delgay, opened in 1913; and the Cercle Artistique et Littéraire, operating from the Wauxhall at the center of Brussels. The Palais du Cinquenaire, constructed

⁸For more on the Brussels Cooperative Workers' Association's selection of Horta to design their center, see Valérie Montens, "Victor Horta's Clients," in *Horta: Art Nouveau to Modernism*, edited by Françoise Aubry and Jos Vandembreden (Ghent: Ludion Press, 1997), 129–30. In the special issue of *Le Peuple* celebrating the opening of the Maison du Peuple, J. Geux drew readers' attention to Horta's extensive study of other spaces in preparation for the design of the new building. The projects Geux emphasized are the Festspielhaus in Bayreuth, as well as that of the building owned by the group "Vooruit" in Antwerp, dedicated to cooperative organization of commerce. Vooruit built its own center, designed by Edward Anseel, completed in 1914. Cited in Horta, *Mémoires*, 54n99.

⁹The leaders of the Section d'Art included many of the same people who were central to the organization and operation of *L'Art moderne* and of the exhibitions at lawyer Edmond Picard's Maison d'Art, including Octave Maus, Maurice Kufferath, and Emile and Lallah Vandervelde. On some occasions, concert programs from the Section d'Art were transplanted without modification to the salons of the Maison d'Art, suggesting that the organizers did not have a clear sense of the cultural perspective of their intended audiences. Paul Aron, *Les écrivains belges et le socialisme (1880–1913). L'expérience de l'art social d'Edmond Picard à Emile Verhaeren* (Brussels: Editions Labor, 1985), 71–73. The Maison du Peuple was demolished in 1965, in spite of international protests.

for the 1880 World's Fair also offered exhibition and concert space.¹⁰ These venues, however, lacked the element of persistent public spectacle, a specific stated mission, or the unity of artistic purpose that the PBA and its affiliated organizations shared.

The idea of a new Palais des Beaux-Arts circulated among the Brussels elite as early as 1908, when Paul Otlet proposed a "Mont des Arts," to bring together specially-designed spaces to a concentrated part of the city and, more importantly, a federation of organizations operating in a building designed specifically for their needs. The proposal stalled after opposition from the Conseil Communal, but a similar idea reappeared in 1913, when King Albert and Queen Elisabeth consulted Adolphe Max, the mayor of Brussels about a similar project.¹¹ This time, the plans reached the point of a proposed design for the new building by François Malfait, which included several concert halls, exposition space, and conference rooms. The war, however, halted any further progress.¹²

After Belgian liberation, the project was revived. Accounts differ as to who initiated the reanimation of the plan, but support for the new PBA came quickly and from many quarters. Paul Lambotte, the director of the Administration des Beaux-Arts for Brussels, hoped to return to the project, arguing that Brussels was in a prime position, culturally and geographically, to replace Munich as an international center for art.¹³ Lambotte began working on the idea unofficially, consulting with Horta on designs for the building. This collaboration culminated with a 20 November 1919 agreement that Horta's plan would be used for the new center, even

¹⁰For more the dynamics of late nineteenth-century performance space in Brussels, see Tatiana Debroux, Valérie Dufour, Catherine A. Hughes, and Christopher Brent Murray, "Toward Mapping Recitals in *fin de siècle* Brussels," *Ad Parnassum*, 12 no. 24 (October 2014): 135–52.

¹¹Paul Otlet, "Le Mont des Arts," *L'Art moderne* 28, no. 14 (5 April 1908): 107–108.

¹²Valérie Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts: la création d'un haut lieu de culture à Bruxelles (1928–1945)* (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2000), 112–13.

¹³*Ibid.*, 114.

before funding had been secured. Likewise, the queen became involved in plans for the new center early on. She offered her support and consulted with Le Bœuf (who called the PBA “Notre Palais des Beaux-Arts” in his letters), insisting that she be kept apprised of the project’s progress.¹⁴ The project also won moral and material support from Adolphe Max.

Without Le Bœuf’s participation, however, the project would have stalled, as pre-war projects had, over the proposed budget. In 1920, the Commission des Finances du Sénat rejected an application to fund the construction on the grounds that it presented too many risks and had an uncertain financial future. The Senate offered instead a 100,000 franc loan, which accounted for only one percent of the proposed budget.¹⁵ The painter Fernand Khnopff suggested a solution: to form a private society dedicated to a public function, using the Société des Arts Décoratifs de France as a model. The private society would raise funds for the project, leaving the government to provide only the land. Adolphe Max, Emile Vinck (a socialist senator), and Alexandre Fraun presented this proposal to Le Bœuf for financial guidance. Le Bœuf and his collaborators created the asbl “Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles,” on 4 April 1922.¹⁶ With the support of Minister of Finance Georges Theunis, the new association obtained a guarantee in August 1922 for a sixty-

¹⁴Henry Le Bœuf’s letters to Elisabeth provided updates on the early stages of planning of the PBA, especially those of 5 June 1920, 17 August 1920, and 10 November 1921, Archives du Secrétariat de la Reine Elisabeth, Archives du Palais Royal (ASRE), Brussels, AE 668 (Lettres et télégrammes adressés à la reine par des musiciens).

¹⁵Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 121, 126. In September 1921, following the initial rejection of the loan, a barbed commentary on the lack of appropriate space for concerts appeared in *L’Eventail*. The journal reported that because the Concerts Ysaÿe could not secure the Salle Patria (the Salle de l’Union Coloniale) for the upcoming season, the society was essentially homeless, and had to resort to petitioning the Ministry of Sciences and Arts to rent the concert hall at the Conservatoire (“Choses de théâtre,” *L’Eventail*, 11 September 1921).

¹⁶The statutes of the new society appeared in the *Bulletin communal de la Ville de Bruxelles*, 14 November 1921.

five year loan from the government to build the center according to Horta's plans.¹⁷ Construction work on the new project began almost immediately, in 1923.¹⁸

Figure 5.1– Façade of the Palais des Beaux-Arts (photo by author)



Horta tucked the PBA into the side of the hill dividing the city into its upper and lower sections. The third floor was level with the crest of the hill so that the new building fit into the Brussels landscape without overshadowing the eighteenth-century design of the Place Royale above, or the Renaissance Grand'Place below.¹⁹ Le Bœuf was keenly interested in the design of

¹⁷Pierre Janlet, "Henry Le Bœuf," *Biographie nationale*, vol. 40, 603–04.

¹⁸Shortly after the creation of the Société Civile du Palais des Beaux-Arts in March 1922, *L'Eventail* reported that the new PBA would open in 1924. The city, however, would have to wait another four years to see the completion of the new building. "Notes de la semaine," *L'Eventail*, 9 April 1922.

¹⁹For more on urban planning, the layout of Brussels, Horta's integration of the upper and lower-city organization around the Senne river basin in his visions for the Putterie district, and his implementation of these ideas in the

the PBA's crown jewel, the new concert hall, which was to be double the size of the auditorium at the TRM.²⁰ His interest in the process of designing and constructing the hall colored his relationship with Horta. Le Bœuf, who was particularly concerned with the acoustics of the new hall, arranged a meeting between the architect and conductor Franz Ruhlmann to discuss the design as early as January 1922.²¹ Le Bœuf also insisted upon a study of other concert halls, conducted by his assistant, Pierre Janlet, who visited concert spaces in London, Cologne, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Basel, and Paris, despite Horta's objections to this kind of meddling in his creative process.²² Le Bœuf also arranged for a meeting between Horta and the acoustic specialist Gustave Lyon in 1925, and Horta was enraged when Lyon claimed that modifications to the final design of the hall were a result of his input.

Horta remembered Le Bœuf's unwelcome involvement as indicative of the administrator's internationalism, which proved to shape most aspects of the music culture at the PBA in the 1930s. Horta wrote:

Aussi, en bon internationaliste, avait-il entrevu dans ses rêves quelque collaboration de plus d'importance et plus ferrée sur les acoustiques que celle d'un humble Belge qui

design of the PBA, see Jos Vandenbreen, "The Palais des Beaux-Arts: Toward an Urban Architecture," *Horta: Art Nouveau to Modernism*, ed. Françoise Aubry and Jos Vandenbreen (Ghent: Ludion Press, 1996), 155–68.

²⁰The Salle Henry Le Bœuf at the PBA has 2100 seats, the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie has 1152.

²¹Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 137. Le Bœuf also arranged for Horta to meet with the painter Emile Wauters to discuss the design of the art galleries.

²²Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 141–42. Horta wrote of the experience: He wrote: "Et voilà jusqu'où nous conduit (et même les meilleurs), notre internationalisme: jusqu'à perdre de vue qu'il était impossible que Lyon eût exercé une influence quelconque sur mon œuvre." Lyon, famous for making modifications to the Trocadéro in Paris and for his work on the Salle Pleyel in Paris, had consulted with Horta when the latter was designing his bronze and glass piano for the Hôtel Solvay in Brussels. Horta, *Mémoires*, 250n90. For Horta's recollection of Le Bœuf's meddling in the process of acoustic design, see his *Mémoires*, 250–55. Of Janlet's reports from his travels to European concert halls, Horta writes: "Toujours est-il que les rapports en question ne m'ont jamais été communiqués... et pour cause, car de connaissais ces grandes salles bien avant d'entreprendre la construction du Palais et je n'avais, mai foi, aucune envie d'augmenter ma réserve de papiers inutiles..." Horta, *Mémoires*, 249.

²²Horta, *Mémoires*, 141–42.

n'avait à son actif que des magasins de second rang, des maisons d'un goût douteux et un hôpital qui avait englouti des millions...!"²³

and later: "mes appréhensions devinrent vite des réalités: Le Bœuf se sentant 'maître chez lui', s'octroya le droit de tout commander... Les choses s'envenimèrent; normalement, j'aurais dû recourir au procès, mais je n'eus ni le désir ni la volonté de le faire."²⁴ Le Bœuf's public show of concern for the technical aspects of the hall was in itself a theatrical gesture that asserted his stamp on not only the concept of the building, but its embodiment in Horta's design. Horta's own recollection of the most important collaborations in the process of designing the ovoid hall, however, resisted the international element and the theatrical parade of meetings and conferences, instead crediting Lallah Vandervelde and Eugène Ysaÿe, two Belgians, for the suggestions that led to his innovative structure and its exemplary acoustics.²⁵ This was the first of many conflicts between the internationalist vision that Le Bœuf championed and the Belgian nationalist protectionism espoused by others.

As sections of the PBA were opened to the public, starting in the spring of 1927, a series of opportunities to assert the new building's status presented themselves. Each inauguration was a public production, with members of the royal family attending, performances, speeches, and tours of the new facilities. The chamber music hall, for instance, opened on 18 November 1928. Among the performers were leading stars of Brussels's musical life, both Belgian and foreign—

²³Ibid., 241.

²⁴Ibid., 242.

²⁵Horta recounts that Ysaÿe, as a performer, wanted to feel "entouré par son public." Horta, *Mémoires*, 252; Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 141–42. Although Lallah Vandervelde was British-born, her extensive work for the Parti Ouvrier Belge and for Belgian relief during World War I established her status as a Belgian, in a similar way to Queen Elisabeth.

most notably Claire Croiza, Emile Bosquet, the Quatuor Pro Arte, and Franz Ruhlmann.²⁶ The audience included a long list of dignitaries: Queen Elisabeth, Princess Marie-José, Adolphe Max, Maurice Lippens, Emile Vandervelde, and ambassadors from France, England, Spain, Portugal, and Italy.²⁷ The concert was conservative featured works by Mozart, Bach, Pergolesi, Vivaldi, and Monteverdi. The focus was largely on the space itself, and not yet on the music that was performed there, but it is significant that for the opening concert, Le Bœuf opted to refrain from programming new music.

The grand concert hall opened the following October with even greater pomp. Ruhlmann directed César Franck's *Psyché*, followed by Peter Benoit's oratorio *De Genius des Vaderlands*, conducted by Flor Alpaerts.²⁸ Prokofiev reports in his diary that Le Bœuf, "a good musician and quite capable of understanding form," conducted the overture to *Die Meistersinger* from memory, a gesture that reemphasized Le Bœuf's reputation as a champion of Wagner's works in Brussels (See chapter 1).²⁹

Le Bœuf's professional obligations to the Société Générale prevented him from taking an active role in the administration of the PBA, and he handed over the direction of the new center to Charles Leirens in April 1928. Leirens studied piano and composition in Ghent and Brussels, but gave up his musical career in 1919. In 1920, he secured an administrative position at the

²⁶Program for the inauguration of the Salle de Musique de Chambre, 18 November 1928, Archives de la Société Philharmonique (ASPh), Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Box 2/1.

²⁷"Personnalités qui assisteront à la cérémonie d'inauguration de la Salle de musique de chambre du Palais des Beaux-Arts," ASPh, Box 2.

²⁸Program for the inauguration of the Grande Salle des Concerts, 19 October 1929, Fonds Fauconnier, Archives de la Ville de Bruxelles (AVB), Box 79.

²⁹Prokofiev, *Diaries 1924–1933*, 943. The Wagner overture, however, was not listed in the printed program.

Secrétariat de la Fondation Universitaire, of which he became the Secretary General in 1928.³⁰ Leirens adopted his new position—and the goals that Le Bœuf had set out for the PBA—with enthusiasm. In a May 1929 interview with *Pourquoi Pas*, he described his vision for the PBA at the end of its first regular concert season: “Ce que nous voulons faire de ceci, [...] c’est un centre international de l’art. Nous voulons doter Bruxelles d’une espèce de Sérapéion, toutes proportions gardées. Nous voulons que les artistes et les amateurs étrangers comme les belges se trouvent ici chez eux, dans un centre d’information et de contrôle.”³¹ Leirens’s emphasis on the international is indicative of the kinds of musical programs presented at the PBA during the first year. He continued in his interview to point out the advantage of the city’s size for visiting artists—not too big, and not too small—“Les manifestations d’art ne risquent pas de s’y noyer dans la foule, comme à Paris ou à Londres.” And of the audience that visiting artists would find there, he writes: “Nous avons un petit public très artiste et un grand public qui ne demande qu’à faire son éducation.”³²

In 1929, Charles Leirens proposed to expand the PBA’s house-organ, *Agenda* to create a critical artistic journal rather than simply a pamphlet that printed extracts from lectures delivered at the PBA, and notes on artistic life in Belgium and abroad. Just as *L’Eventail* served as the official paper of the TRM and the Théâtre du Parc, the new *Les Beaux-Arts*, was the only journal to be sold at the PBA. It quickly became a leading publication in Brussels, despite political

³⁰Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 158. “M. Leyrens[sic],” *Pourquoi pas?* 19, no. 773 (24 May 1929): 972–73. This article is one of the few examples that mentions opposition to the project from the owners of art galleries and concert halls in Brussels at the time. See also Marc Vausort, *Charles Leirens: “L’Intelligence du Regard”* (Charleroi: Musée de la Photographie, 1991).

³¹“M. Leyrens[sic],” *Pourquoi pas?* 19, no. 773 (24 May 1929): 972.

³²Ibid.

missteps on the part of the editors, Paul and Luc Haessaerts.³³ Records from the Société Philharmonique reflect the careful coordination of articles with concerts, as notices about composers, performers, and works appeared just before major performances to peak interest.³⁴ In the project of centralizing and standardizing a view of musical life in Brussels, the control of information through the journal was of vital importance. In 1932, after a scandal in which personal antagonisms between *Le Bœuf* and composer Paul Gilson became public, Marcel Cuvelier and Pierre Janlet, *Le Bœuf*'s two assistants, took over the editorship of the journal.³⁵ The two had directed the *Cahiers de Belgique*, a competing journal, since 1928, and under their editorship, *Les Beaux-Arts* offered articles written by the group of critics who had been part of the team of writers for *Cahiers de Belgique*. Most of the music articles in the new journal were written by Hermann Closson and Joseph Weterings, with occasional submissions by Paul Tinel, Paul Collaer, Paul Moulaert, Arthur Hoérée, René Bernier, and Jean Absil.³⁶

In addition to its coverage of the Palais des Beaux-Arts, the journal reported on important events farther afield. The international flavor of these notices corresponded with the cosmopolitan image that the directors of the PBA hoped to project, by showing interest in the world beyond the walls of their new center and also by showing how their enterprise fit into that world. In September 1932, for instance, articles about the Salzburg Festival and the second Venice Festival appeared side-by-side. Both articles focused on news that would be interesting to

³³Motens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 199–200.

³⁴See, for instance, “Journal ‘Les Beaux-Arts’. Articles souhaités par la Société Philharmonique,” ASPH, Box 8. The document lists the subjects of requested articles for each issue of the journal from 12 January through 27 April 1934.

³⁵For more on the circumstances surrounding this scandal, in which *Le rouge et le noir* questioned *Le Bœuf*'s authority to critique Gilson, as Gilson was a professional composer and a fervent patriot and *Le Bœuf* was a banker and “plus royaliste que le roi,” (6 November 1930), see Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux Arts*, 203.

³⁶Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 203.

the Belgian-minded, by reporting on the activities of Belgian musicians at these events. In Salzburg, Gabrielle Tambuysen performed Mozart's piano concerto no. 23, in a concert conducted by Bruno Walter. The article also listed Belgians and residents of Belgium who attended, including Stanley Woodward, the ambassador of the United States to Belgium, composer and music critic Paul Tinel, and Maurice Wynandt.³⁷ In Venice, the festival, under the patronage of the Princess of the Piedmont (formerly Princess Marie-José of Belgium), featured Desiré Defauw conducting a concert of French and Belgian music, including Poulenc, Roussel, Tomasi, Ibert, and Jongen. *Les Beaux-Arts* reports with satisfaction that the *Gazetta di Venezia* declared the Belgian conductor a "ciseleur de la musique moderne."³⁸

The Société Philharmonique at the Palais des Beaux-Arts

Given the financial difficulties that the PBA planners had in securing money for the construction of the project, it became apparent early on that a single directorial board could not take responsibility for all of the activities that were to take place there. The solution, devised by Le Bœuf, which would free the board of directors of the PBA from direct financial responsibility for any one exhibition or concert, was a federation of auxiliary societies that would take over the planning for various sections: the Société Philharmonique directed musical events, the Société des Expositions was responsible for art exhibitions, the Société Auxiliaire des Spectacles et Conférences directed theater and lectures, and the Studio des Frères Oswald et Robert Putzeys put on film programs.³⁹ The new organization made each society independent of the others and

³⁷"Le Festival de Salzbourg," *Les Beaux-Arts*, 30 September 1932.

³⁸"Le Ite Festival International de musique à Venise," *Les Beaux-Arts*, 30 September 1932.

³⁹Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 2.

excluded them from receiving any of the government funding that had been granted to the PBA itself, a move designed to relieve some of the criticism from the press over the large deficits that the center was accruing at the expense of the government.⁴⁰ By 1931, this system was fully in place, and the sole responsibility of the PBA itself was to rent space to the auxiliary societies.⁴¹ Le Bœuf's direct involvement in many of these societies, as well as the character of the PBA as a center where the arts came together, however, blurred the lines between each society and the PBA, both in the eyes of the public and the press, and within the administration.

The Société Philharmonique had been in existence since 10 November 1927, perhaps in anticipation of this federation of auxiliary societies at the PBA. Le Bœuf's step to preempt any loss of control over the musical activity once the PBA was up and running. In effect, Le Bœuf explained this in a letter to Leriens:

J'en avais la prescience au moment où j'avais créé la Société Philharmonique de Bruxelles; de plus en plus je me confirme dans cette conviction que cette Société Philharmonique doit être l'instrument, indépendant du Palais des Beaux-Arts, mais en relations étroites avec celui-ci, et qui s'occupait de tout ce que le Palais des Beaux-Arts souhaitera voir réaliser en matière musicale dans ses locaux.⁴²

With the creation of the new Société Philharmonique in 1927, Le Bœuf engaged a new assistant to take on a similar role to that of Pierre Janlet at the Concerts Populaires, Marcel Cuvelier.⁴³

⁴⁰Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 161–62.

⁴¹Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux Arts*, 5. For an example of one such contract, between the PBA and the Vlaamse Volkstooneel dated 7 October 1930, see Archief van het Vlaamsche Volkstooneel (AvVVT), KADOC, Documentatie-en Onderzoekscentrum voor Religie, Cultuur en Samenleving, Leuven, Belgium, BE/942855/732.

⁴²Henry Le Bœuf to Charles Leriens, 11 April 1929. Quoted in Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 84.

⁴³An amateur violinist and jazz musician, Cuvelier (1899–1959) worked as a lawyer for three years before he became Le Bœuf's assistant in 1927. Le Bœuf first met Cuvelier through his son, who knew Cuvelier in the military. In 1916, as a student at the Athénée d'Ixelles, Cuvelier organized a student orchestra. At the same time that he was studying for his doctorate in law at the ULB, Cuvelier was also taking violin and harmony lessons at the Académie de Musique d'Etterbeek in Brussels, where he earned a first prize in violin in 1919. He studied privately with the pianist Eduardo del Pueyo, who was based in Brussels, and later studied counterpoint at the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles with Francis de Bourguignon. Cuvelier tried his hand at composition, but later said of his attempts: "mieux vaudrait ne pas en parler." Cuvelier had been a friend of Le Bœuf's son, and in the years just after World

The young lawyer and musician became a vital member of Le Bœuf's team, and took over the role of director of the Société Philharmonique after Le Bœuf's death.

The Société Philharmonique boasted Baron Victor Buffin in the honorary position of president, but it was Le Bœuf, the administrateur-délegué, who made the decisions for the society. A chart of the organization of the society, drawn up in 1932, offers a useful overview of the structure, when it was at its height of centralizing power. The Conseil d'Administration made recommendations to the Conseil de Direction, which in turn organized the different concert series under the society's purview.

The neat construction of this 1932 document, however, belies the internal tensions of the Société Philharmonique's structures, as Le Bœuf manipulated it in order to realize his own musical agendas. Members of the Conseil d'Administration, a group intended to give advice on programming for all of the Société Philharmonique's activities leveled outspoken criticism against the Conseil de Direction for its heavy-handedness, and their unwillingness to discuss programming before settling on a season's repertoire, soloists, and conductors.

Paul Collaer's relationship with the Conseil d'administration best illustrates the autocratic approach that Le Bœuf (and his partners, Buffin and Cuvelier) took in developing the Société Philharmonique's agendas. Collaer's connections to many musicians through his work with the Concerts Pro Arte made him an ideal member of the Conseil when the Société Philharmonique

War I kept a diary that detailed the concerts he attended at the Conservatoire, the Concerts Populaires, the TRM, and even some concerts in Paris. His musical tastes ran toward new works by Satie, Poulenc, Auric, and Milhaud. He was also a member of the jazz group Doctor Mysterious Six, with Robert Goffin, two sons of the financier Adolphe Stoclet, René and Jacques, and several other young Belgians. Cuvelier kept journals of his impressions about the concerts he attended from 1919 through 1934. In addition to his administrative work, Cuvelier founded the monthly journal *Cahiers de Belgique* in 1927 with Pierre Janlet. The journal functioned as the unofficial periodical of the PBA until 1931, when *Les Beaux-Arts* was founded. During his tenure as the Société Philharmonique, Cuvelier was involved in many important events, including an international dance competition, the Concours Reine Elisabeth, and the Jeunesses Musicales at the PBA (for more on the Jeunesses Musicales, see my epilogue). See Monique Verken, "Portrait d'un grand organisateur, Marcel Cuvelier," *Les Beaux-Arts*, 20 June 1952; and Valérie Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 215–28.

wanted to attract international visitors—which would boost its status as a cosmopolitan organization. Collaer’s hand in attracting internationally-renowned musicians to the PBA is apparent in the correspondence concerning the first season at the PBA. Letters from Béla Bartók’s management agency, in 1928, and to Paul Hindemith and to Schott, in 1930, reveal the importance of Collaer’s function as a go-between for the Société Philharmonique.⁴⁴

At the same time, in the face of low ticket sales and large deficits, which prompted the Société Philharmonique’s Conseil de Direction to program more standard repertoire for their symphonic concerts, Collaer adopted the stance of the watchdog for new music, as he had been doing at the Concerts Pro Arte. It was this stewardship for musical modernism which occupied him more than his role as a liaison with musicians for the Société Philharmonique. Collaer was concerned about the conventional turn the Société Philharmonique had taken for the 1929–30 season. He wrote to Cuvelier:

Commercialiser les concerts c’est parfait. Mais il ne faut pas que la musique en souffre. M. Le Bœuf a fait un effort énorme avec nous, pour gratter le temps perdu et mettre Bruxelles à la hauteur des grands capitales musicales. Ce serait un crime de laisser retomber tout au niveau qu’il y a dix ans. Aussi, je vois de l’avant. Tâche de te débrouiller malgré le comité pour marcher toute-de-même. Si nous les écoutons trop, les autres, nous finirons par avoir une barbe blanche et une tête chauve.⁴⁵

Collaer’s equates Le Bœuf’s “commercializing” of concerts with moving backwards. His letter reflects the fierce independence with which he directed his own Concerts Pro Arte, as well as his relatively unconcerned attitude toward the tastes of a general audience. He saw the Société Philharmonique as hovering on the brink of becoming a bastion of the old guard. As Collaer’s correspondence with Cuvelier about the Concerts Pro Arte demonstrates, the accusation of

⁴⁴Paul Bechert to Marcel Cuvelier, 10 January 1928. ASPH, Box 1. Cuvelier wrote to Collaer asking him to explain to Hindemith that Schott’s fees for *Nouvelles du jour* and his viola concerto were too high for the Société Philharmonique, and to find out what Hindemith was willing to do if the Société Philharmonique could not reach an agreement with Schott (Marcel Cuvelier to Paul Collaer, 10 October 1930. ASPH, Box 3).

⁴⁵Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier, 4 March 1930. ASPH, Box 3.

becoming conventional or set in one's ways was one of the worst that he thought could be leveled at a music organizer.

Two years later, Collaer wrote again about his dissatisfaction with the Société Philharmonique, this time in more specific terms, leveling his criticism at the "conseil intérieur" (the Conseil de Direction) for their heavy-handed approach to programming, which made the Conseil d'Administration effectively useless. He complained that Le Bœuf, Buffin, and Cuvelier developed programs without considering input from others:

Je suis le seul à intervenir. Mais cela ne sert à rien. On me jette un cas de teufs à autre. Ce n'est pas mon affaire. Désormais, je me tiendrai bien tranquille, et ferai des propositions platoniques, sur papier. Au fond, vous avez raison, vous trois du comité intérieur. Vous avez la responsabilité de la conduite de la Philharmonique. Il est juste que vous en fournir à votre tête. Je souhaite que vos idées soient les bonnes. Mais je me permets d'en douter et ne vois pas l'avenir de la Philharmonique en rose. Je n'insiste plus sur ce sujet. Car, si le baron Buffin est encore donc accessible aux raisons d'autrui, tu sais aussi bien que moi que M. Le Bœuf l'est moins.⁴⁶

It is significant that Collaer's grievance came at the same time that the relationship between the society and the Concerts Pro Arte were breaking down (see chapter 2).

Moreover, Collaer expected, due to this reputation as a champion for musical modernism, that he should be involved in planning new music concerts where appropriate. Worse, he felt slighted when the Société Philharmonique overlooked him in the process of planning performances of works that had appeared on his Concerts Pro Arte programs. Such was the case in 1933. That spring, Le Bœuf was planning a performance of *Les Noces*, which had received its Belgian premiere at the Concerts Pro Arte the year before, with Collaer playing one of the four piano parts. Collaer, however, was not included in the Société Philharmonique plans. Collaer took personal offense to this decision, writing:

⁴⁶Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier, 5 March 1932. ASPH, Box 5.

Notez que je ne songe en rien à critiquer le choix des Bosquet, Maas, Askenase et du Chastain, comme pianistes cherchés de jouer Strawinsky et le concerto à 4 pianos de Bach.

Seulement le fait que je ne figure pas dans cette distribution constitue pour mon action musicale un préjudice grave. Comme j'ai joué les *Noces* avec Ansermet, il y a quelques années, je suis en droit de croire, n'étant pas redemandé, que j'ai été jugé incapable de remplir l'emploi qui m'a été confié. J'écarte cette éventualité, surtout après le franc succès que m'ont toujours voulu mes interprétations des œuvres de Strawinsky.

De plus, il m'est absolument impossible d'admettre mon éloignement de l'équipe des "*Noces*" après avoir lutté pendant de nombreuses années pour la musique moderne, et ce au bénéfice de pianistes qui ne sont jamais soucieux d'inscrire une œuvre de Strawinsky à leurs programmes.⁴⁷

Collaer's indignation indicates a sense of personal ownership over the musical life in Brussels that he harbored, and a sense of competition with other influential organizations and their directors. Although both Collaer and Le Bœuf were drawing from a similar pool of performers and a similar repertoire, Collaer's sense of ownership, when faced with Le Bœuf's own version of Brussels's "vie musicale," produced an unresolvable conflict. Defending the increasingly centralized musical life in Brussels under the Société Philharmonique, Le Bœuf responded:

Vous avez contribué plus que tout autre à faire connaître les tendances et essais contemporains dans la musique de chambre. De mon côté, j'ai fait jouer depuis dix ans et plus les ouvrages symphoniques de même portée et signification. Cela nous donne-t-il à tous deux un monopole? Aura-je jamais la moindre réaction si une autre Société de concerts reprend tout ce que j'ai donné, depuis la suite *Scythe*, toute Strawinsky, Bartock[sic], le terrible Villa Lobos? Le prendrai-je pour une offense personnelle, un oubli de mes sacrifices?⁴⁸

Although Le Bœuf asks his rhetorical questions in order to show how unreasonable Collaer's complaints over the plans for *Les Noces* were, Le Bœuf's work to centralize music and control musical life in Brussels suggests that the answers would in truth have been "yes," rather than "no."

⁴⁷Paul Collaer to Henry Le Bœuf, 8 April 1933. ASPH, Box 8.

⁴⁸Henry Le Bœuf to Paul Collaer. 9 April 1933, ASPH, Box 8.

Collaer's letters in the weeks that followed detail his anxieties about his changing position in the city's musical life, as Le Bœuf's vision, bolstered by the centralizing force of the Société Philharmonique's organization and the status of the PBA, quickly became the dominant version of music in Brussels. In a letter dated 29 May 1933, Collaer writes to Cuvelier that he feels the Société Philharmonique has no place for him, and that his work there was in vain.⁴⁹ Although Cuvelier's response does not survive, Collaer's next letter suggests that Cuvelier accused him of having a persecution complex ("folie de persécution"). Collaer responded by reemphasizing of his perception that he was being passed over in Brussels:

habitant Malines, on ne se rend pas très bien compte à Bruxelles du travail que je fournis dans l'intérêt de la musique. Que le souci que je prends des musiciens et de la musique, et les résultats directs que j'obtiens sans aussitôt les faire remarquer, s'ils passent un peu inaperçues du fait que je ne me mêle pas à la vie quotidienne du P.B.A., méritent que je sois traité autrement qu'un vieux notaire.⁵⁰

He continues with an extended critique of the Société Philharmonique—and specifically the function of the Conseil d'Administration, about which he had raised similar, though less extensive complaints, in 1932.

La philharmonique est une belle société mais je n'en suis pas du tout content. [...] Chaque année, sous divers prétextes, on recule les bonnes choses vers l'année suivante. Toutes les œuvres qu'il faut donner restent en panne, qu'ils adjoignent du Relais de Markevich, du Concert d'Hindemith, des Schoenberg, Schostakovitch et autres. Et quand, par hasard, on donne un Lully ou un Purcell, c'est tellement mal joué, en dehors de tout souci musical, en dehors de toute compétence que cela amène un four. Et pourquoi celui? Parce que, à la Philharmonique, le comité n'est convoqué que pour soutenir des entreprises qui risqueront de valoir des ennuis. [...] La partie la plus délicate, celle qui exige des compétences techniques: programmes et interprètes, est décidée par un comité intérieur. Je sais bien que, théoriquement, à la séance générale, le comité pourrait demander des manifestations. Mais 'ce serait très mal vu'. [...] D'autres membres du comité sont tout aussi mécontents que moi, mais n'auront pas le souci ou le courage de le dire. Cela peut convenir à de vieux messieurs bien sages, de venir s'asseoir sur une chaise

⁴⁹Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier. 29 May 1933, ASPH, Box 8.

⁵⁰Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier. 30 May 1933, ASPH, Box 8.

pour s'entendre faire un petite communication sur les concerts qu'il y aura la saison prochain, et dire ensuite 'amen'.

[...] A la Phil, on ne parvient jamais à parler musique pendant une heure; que dis-je! pendant cinq minutes. Comment veux-tu, dès lors, arriver à une certaine unité spirituelle, à une continuité de l'effort? [...] Vous arrangez, en triumverat, toutes les questions musicales, et devant nous, tout ce qu'il y a à dire, ce sont des questions de budget. On nous parle banque, mais je suis venu pour faire de la musique.⁵¹

Despite Collaer's differences with the Société Philharmonique, however, he continued to work as a member of the Conseil d'Administration to build programs for the Société Philharmonique's orchestral concerts for two more seasons. His assertion that other members of the Conseil d'Administration were equally unhappy would not be proved until 1936, when Ernest Closson resigned, citing similar complaints. In 1933, Collaer wrote to Le Bœuf about plans to program Milhaud's *Choéphores*, to be conducted by De Vocht with the Chorale Caecilia.⁵²

Likewise, Collaer offered comments on the 1934–35 season. Le Bœuf's response to one such letter reveals much about the logic behind the development of a season program.⁵³ Collaer complained of the predominance of German music in Société Philharmonique programs; Le Bœuf responded:

C'est la musique allemande et les grands interprètes allemands qui attirent le plus de public.

Cela se comprend: c'est le pays le plus musicien, où la musique est le plus à l'honneur et où la culture musicale est la plus avancée.

Relisez nos programmes de la saison actuelle vous y verrez évidemment le concert Furgwaengler et le concert Bruno Walter qui sont allemands.

⁵¹Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier, 30 June 1933. ASPH, Box 7.

⁵²Paul Collaer to Henry Le Bœuf, 10 October 1933. ASPH, Box 7. In May 1933, Cuvelier invited Claire Croiza to Brussels to sing in Milhaud's work, listing the dates of the performance as 10 and 11 February 1934 (Marcel Cuvelier to Claire Croiza, 3 May 1933. ASPH, Box 8). The performance for those dates, however, only featured excerpts of the work. A full production *Choéphores* took place at the TRM, rather than through the Société Philharmonique, in March 1935.

⁵³Collaer's letter to Le Bœuf, dated 30 January 1934 does not survive, but Cuvelier's response of 8 February, gives an impression of Collaer's main concerns. ASPH, Box 7.

Néanmoins, ces réserves faites, je suis de votre avis!
Malheureusement, intervient alors la qualité des interprètes.⁵⁴

In the second part of the letter, Le Bœuf agreed with Collaer's call for more unknown repertoire in the season's program. He acknowledged the possibility of programming French and Italian music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as possibilities, along with Hungarian and Czech music, but continued, perhaps in response to a request from Collaer for more new music: "Quant aux modernes, nous y revenons tout doucement. Mais il faut faire attention aux recettes! Vous avez eu la leçon aux Pro Arte, moi-même qui ai fait aux Populaires dans la grande musique symphonique et que vous faisiez dans la musique de chambre, je sais ce qu'il m'en a coûté." Le Bœuf insisted on disagreeing with Collaer's idealistic assertion that the majority of concert goers demanded new music as part of the programs. He explained:

Le public arrive, en majorité, après plusieurs années à comprendre et aimer les œuvres qui l'étonnent par leur nouveauté, mais jamais la majorité du public ne demande la nouveauté.

Même accord pour les Biches de Poulenc qui sont inscrites chez nous depuis 5 ou 6 ans!

Même accord pour les Cantates du 18e dont j'ai inscrit quelques unes, nominalement, dans mes programmes et mes projets, aussi depuis plusieurs années!⁵⁵

Le Bœuf's analysis of audiences here and his tempered approach to introducing unknown works—whether new or old—suggests that he had a more realistic view of the public's tastes and demands than did Collaer, whose experience with commercial concerns was limited.

Building general audiences for a broad range of repertoire was a goal that carried over from the Concerts Populaires of the 1920s. The questions of how new was too new (or not new enough), and how much new music was too much (or not enough) occupied concert organizers as well as Belgian music critics throughout the early 1930s. At the end of the 1928–29 season,

⁵⁴Henry Le Bœuf to Paul Collaer, 8 February 1934. ASPH, Box 8.

⁵⁵Henry Le Bœuf to Paul Collaer, 8 February 1934. ASPH, Box 8.

for instance, Philippe Mousset, the conservative critic for *La Nation belge*, wrote about the final concert of the season, exposing the conservative nature of the program, conducted by Defauw.

Ostensibly dedicated to “modern” music,

C’est que, en réalité, les ‘Nocturnes’ de Debussy, un chef-d’œuvre de cette musique impressionniste qui, il y a quelque trente ans, déchaîna tant de passion combative, et ‘Mort et Transfiguration’ de Richard Strauss sont bien près d’être devenus classiques; tandis que la ‘Symphonie classique’ de Serge Prokofieff, c’est bel et bien, classique par sa construction, son inspiration, ses procédés mêmes.⁵⁶

Mousset judged Prokofiev as essentially writing in the tradition of Boccherini, Stamitz, and Gossec, rather than in the trend of “musique future.” This and other views indicate that the critics in Brussels were invested in continuing to present music that felt new, often dismissing works only recently been celebrated as representing the avant-garde if those compositions were performed often enough to be folded into the standard repertoire. Instead they clamored for ever newer works and younger composers.

The Société Philharmonique’s Repertoire

It was perhaps the 1930 performance of Stravinsky’s *Symphonie de Psaumes*, conducted by Désormière that emphasized the push and pull between the new and the not as new in Brussels. Brussels celebrated the conductor as Stravinsky’s “admirateur le plus sincère” and the “apôtre le plus convaincu,” and celebrated his earlier appearances at the Concerts Populaires as markers of the city’s forward-looking musical taste. With the exception of the *Symphonie de Psaumes*, which had been written for the Boston Symphony Orchestra’s fiftieth anniversary, the program represented the works that had already begun to enter the standard concert repertoire, or ones that

⁵⁶Philippe Mousset, “Musique: Société Philharmonique,” *Nation belge* 11 March 1929. Valérie Dufour points out that Stravinsky’s earlier works, particularly *L’Oiseau de feu*, *Petrushka*, *Pulcinella*, and *Le Rossignol*, had entered the standard concert repertoire, and were programmed regularly at the Société Philharmonique after 1933. Valérie Dufour, *Stravinsky à Bruxelles, 1920–1936* (Brussels: Académie Royale de Belgique, 2003), 101.

promised to be in the near future: the overture to *Mavra*, *Quatre études*, *Capriccio* (with Stravinsky as the piano soloist), and the suite from *L'Oiseau de feu*. The reviews of the concert discussed Stravinsky not as a controversial leader of the avant-garde, but as a respected and established composer: “Aucune des œuvres exécutées ne faisait violence au public traditionnel. Elles mettaient en belle lumière l'étonnante maîtrise du musicien et la prodigieuse variété de son inspiration formelle.”⁵⁷

Brussels, in effect, celebrated its acceptance of Stravinsky in a way that indicated a sense of ownership over the composer, his music, and his reputation as a giant of twentieth century music. *L'Indépendance Belge*, for instance, took the opportunity to congratulate Belgian audiences on their enthusiasm for the composer in an announcement of the upcoming concert: “Strawinsky compte de nombreux amis en Belgique. On y suit avec une attention particulière toute son activité créatrice. Il a voulu, par sa présence à ce festival et par l'octroi à ces premières auditions, montrer en quelque sorte sa reconnaissance à notre public.”⁵⁸ The way the author transfers the agency for planning this concert from the Société Philharmonique to Stravinsky emphasizes the sense of importance of Belgium as a center for new music, and a place where composers actively sought to have their music performed. A key point that critics made in their articles leading up to and after the performance was that the Belgian performance of the *Symphonie de psaumes* was the first European premiere of a Stravinsky work outside of Paris.

Mousset, however, continued to regard Stravinsky's music and the adulation he received with suspicion:

⁵⁷J-B. D., “Le concert philharmonique,” *Le Soir*, 16 December 1930.

⁵⁸“Chronique Musicale,” *L'Indépendance belge*, 6 November 1930.

Evidemment, pour ceux qui connaissent la littérature musicale du passé et les chefs-d'œuvre qu'elle contient, pour ceux dont l'exécution n'est suscitée que par un lyrisme inspiré par un développement où l'esprit a autant de part que la raison, les compositions nouvelles de M. Stravinsky apparaissent aussi vides qu'inélégantes, tandis que pour les autres, dont l'initiation à l'art sonore commence à peine, ou qui sont plus sensibles aux impressions physiques qu'aux réactions de la sensibilité, elles peuvent paraître aussi nouvelles que pleines d'intérêt.⁵⁹

Mousset criticized Stravinsky's simplification of melodic lines, his use of repetition, and the "fluctuations du mouvement" that replaced "nuances expressives" in Stravinsky's new work, concluding that the music was mechanical. The city took great pride in having played a part in the history of the composition, and it was performed several times in the 1930s, each time with the press reminding audiences of the historic European premiere of the work. Stravinsky's contract for the commission for the BSO stipulated that the premiere had to take place before the end of November 1930. The Boston premiere was postponed until 19 December, however, making the Brussels performance the first not only in Europe, but in the world.⁶⁰

In addition to key works that became entwined with the history of the Société Philharmonique and the lore of the city's musical life, internationally renowned performers became fixtures at the Palais des Beaux-Arts. This was particularly true of conductors, who returned year after year to lead either single concerts or a series at the invitation of the Conseil d'Administration. Among them were Vladimir Golschmann, who had made his Brussels premiere at the Concerts Populaires and had begun to establish himself as a leading composer in the United States in the 1930s; Bruno Walter, who had been in exile from his native Germany since the rise of the Nazi party; Erich Kleiber, who toured Europe and the United States extensively; and Hermann Scherchen, a proponent of the second Viennese school. This heavily German stable of visiting conductors presented a delicate political situation to the PBA. Just as

⁵⁹Philippe Mousset, "Les Concerts à Bruxelles," *La Nation belge*, 15 December 1930.

⁶⁰Sergey Prokofiev, *Diaries 1924–1933*, 943.

he had done with the reorganization of the Concerts Populaires in 1919, Le Bœuf paid careful attention to the political implications that were at play in any relationship with German music or German musicians.

In 1928, Le Bœuf's correspondence indicates that he was still sensitive to the memory of the German occupation that ended ten years earlier, or at least that he used this memory as a tool to steer programming to conform to his tastes. The Société Philharmonique considered inviting the Quatuor Amar-Hindemith to play at the new Salle de Musique de Chambre in 1928. After the society received the quartet's response, however, including their request for a fee of 1000 marks, Le Bœuf wrote to Leirens, expressing his reservations about the quartet: "Je pense assez difficile de demander la participation d'un quatuor allemand pour les premiers jours d'ouverture de la salle de musique de chambre. Peut-être pourrait-on répondre à M. Licco Amar qu'il peut venir en Belgique après sa tournée en Allemagne, le cachet me paraît d'ailleurs très cher aussi."⁶¹ Whether Le Bœuf's thoughts were motivated principally by nationalist interests or financial concerns may be impossible to discern; it is significant, however, that international relations come into play in the planning for the concert season.

Le Bœuf created a series of "grands concerts étrangers" under the banner of the Société Philharmonique's regular offerings the following year. These concerts were important in establishing the PBA as a key international music center. The series brought foreign orchestras to Brussels—most notably the Orchestra of the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam conducted by Mengelberg and the Orchestre Symphonique de Paris conducted by Pierre Monteux. These concerts proved to be particularly popular with the Belgian audiences. Instead of the new repertoire that

⁶¹Henry Le Bœuf to Charles Leirens, 1 June 1928. ASPH, Box 1. Amar's letter to Le Bœuf is dated 30 May 1928. In the bottom margin of the letter, Le Bœuf wrote a note mirroring the concerns that he expresses in his letter to Leirens: "Peut on [sic] amener ce quatuor allemand à la salle de musique de chambre 8 jours après l'inauguration et dans la période d'inauguration encore." Licco Amar to Henry Le Bœuf, 30 May 1928. ASPH, Box 1. The Société Philharmonique and the quartet negotiated a 700 mark fee for their appearance.

the Société Philharmonique often emphasized in the regular season, the visiting orchestras tended to offer exemplary interpretations of well-known pieces.

The PBA offered a new state-of-the-art facility where international musical meetings and conferences could take place in addition to the subscription concert series. If the presence of Stravinsky, Walter, Mengelberg, and the many other foreign musicians over the course of regular seasons organized by the Société Philharmonique helped bolster Brussels's international profile, the conferences that took place at the PBA confirmed the importance of Belgium in international discussions about music. The new space at the Palais des Beaux-Arts allowed Brussels to stage events that would have been prohibitively complex, if not impossible before.

In December 1932, the PBA hosted the second meeting of the Fédération Internationale des Concerts in December. Le Bœuf was the director of the Belgian chapter of the federation.⁶² The federation's focus on international musical relations rested squarely on rhetoric about the universality of music and the shared concerns of musicians around the world.⁶³ The meeting, as well as the social gatherings and concerts scheduled to coincide with the three-day event, emphasized internationalism rather than Belgian nationalism. The reception given by Maurice Lippens, the former governor of the Belgian Congo, proved to be a social and artistic success,

⁶²Among the Belgian members of the new federation were the Concerts Spirituels, the Concerts Defauw, the Théâtre de la Monnaie, the Société Philharmonique, the Concerts Ysaÿe, the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles, the Orchestre Symphonique Populaire, and the Fondation Reine Elisabeth. "Fédération Internationale des Concerts," ASPH, Box 6. The first meeting of the federation, which included members from Austria, Belgium, France, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Poland, Sweden, and Czechoslovakia, took place in Budapest on 29 and 30 October 1929. The second took place in Rome on 21–25 April 1931, with an even longer list of national delegates. Founded by the Count San Martino, who was the director of the Regia Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, the federation's goals were to facilitate exchange of works and artists among countries; introduce new composers, soloists, and composers; facilitate government subsidies to allow musicians to travel and perform abroad; and to standardize legislation having to do with performance, concert societies, and artists across national borders. See "Le Congrès de la Fédération Internationale des Concerts," *Les Beaux-Arts*, 2 December 1932.

⁶³In his opening speech for the 1932 congress, for instance, the Count di San Martino emphasized that music, among all the arts, was the most suitable to establishing international relations, and that the federation was vital because it united nations in consideration of common concerns. See "'Le Congrès de la Fédération internationale des concerts," *Les Beaux-Arts*, 16 December 1932.

with Belgian artists and foreign delegates rubbing elbows with the royal family and other important personalities in Belgium. The Société Philharmonique arranged for its second subscription concert to take place during the conference. It featured the *Symphonie de psaumes*, which had been the society's crowning achievement of the 1930–31 season, as well as Respighi's *Pini di Roma*. The first concert of that year's Concerts Pro Arte also took place that week, featuring Schubert's Quartet in G major (op. 161), Schoenberg's String Quartet no. 3, and Mozart's Clarinet Quintet. Although more conventional than most Pro Arte programming, *Les Beaux-Arts* explained that "tant au point de vue du style que des tendances esthétiques, des abîmes semblent séparer, ils s'attachèrent à les rendre avec la même fidélité, la même conscience, le même souci du parachevé."⁶⁴ Indeed, the Société Philharmonique's programming put the best of its recent past on display for the international visitors, though it did not take the opportunity to offer a new, untried premiere. Although offering performances of new works was integral to the organization's public image, it was perhaps indicative of Le Bœuf's cautiousness that he avoided the risk of an unsuccessful first performance for such an important international event.

Le Bœuf, the Société Philharmonique, and the PBA also made a show of declaring support for Belgian music. A report at the end of the 1930–31 Société Philharmonique season emphasized the Belgian element in the programming for that year: "Nous n'avons pas manqué d'inscrire cette année à nos programmes une série aussi nombreuse que possible d'œuvres belges." The report claimed "La Société Philharmonique se place ainsi comme une œuvre de propagande nationale."⁶⁵ In the following season, however, the administrative correspondence

⁶⁴G. de G., "Concerts," *Les Beaux-Arts*, 16 December 1932.

⁶⁵"Rapport. Saison 1930–1931," ASPH, Box 4.

reflects the way in which Belgian music was shuffled among concert programs, and treated with less urgency than works by foreign composers and standard repertoire. The fifth concert of the season featured Désiré Inghelbrecht, conducting Debussy's *Le Martyr de Saint Sebastien*, with Marguerite Thys as the soloist, and his own *Sinfonia Breve*. In the correspondence about planning the program, the Conseil proposed a work by Jongen, followed by a symphony by Charles Houdret. Of the addition of a Belgian composer to the program, Cuvelier wrote, "Vous savez que nous sommes obligés de jouer une œuvre belge à tous nos concerts."⁶⁶ An examination of that season's programs, however, shows that although this was the party line of the Société Philharmonique, it was not its practice. The Houdret symphony did not appear on that program, and it was proposed again for the seventh concert of the season, conducted by Defauw.

Critical Reception of the PBA: "Citadelle du snobisme?"

After three years of ambitious and unprofitable programs—both musical and artistic—the board of directors of the PBA terminated Charles Leirens's tenure as director of the PBA. General Paul Giron replaced Leirens, prompting P. Fontaine to declare: "Le Palais des Beaux-Arts, qui devait constituer à Bruxelles un centre d'art actif, vivant et multiple, est devenu la citadelle du snobisme. L'ingérence dans son Conseil d'administration d'un tas de personnalités fermées aux Lettres comme aux Arts en a vicié l'atmosphère."⁶⁷ Fontaine goes on to depict the PBA's activities as the opposite of the utopian vision that Le Bœuf had set out: instead of a place for all artists and a space dedicated to new works, the PBA, Fontaine writes, had become merely a collection of spaces for hire, and the people who rented them were the same people who

⁶⁶Marcel Cuvelier to Désiré-Emile Inghelbrecht, 20 March 1931. ASPH, Box 5.

⁶⁷P. Fontaine, "Hors de là général!" *Le Rouge et le noir*, 9 November 1931. Quoted in Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 166.

controlled the cultural life of the city elsewhere, which did not allow for any room for development or exploration in the arts.⁶⁸ In fact, snobs and snobism were terms so common in the criticism of the intellectual elite that parodies of such people and their tastes were integral to Belgian culture of the time. Music publisher J. Buyst, for instance, printed “*Marche des snobs*,” a short piano work by Fernand Rousseau, illustrated by René Magritte.⁶⁹

Throughout the 1930s, many critics, especially those with socialist sympathies, leveled a familiar criticism against music at the PBA—one that the Concerts Populaires, the Concerts Pro Arte, and the TRM also faced—that of exclusivity and that of internationalist tendencies. Considering the comprehensive mission that the PBA created for itself, the heart of which was the goal to make art accessible to the general public, such criticism was perhaps warranted. Complaints of internationalism and snobism were also closely linked with the problem of ownership of the Belgian art. As a space where the elite gathered regularly, but the working-class audiences came only periodically, the PBA had become a bastion of artistic elitism. Just as the general public felt excluded from the PBA, the programming of the Société Philharmonique gave the impression that the music did not “belong” to the audiences or to the Belgian musicians. It was in the press that many of the critics, who were also composers, expressed their unhappiness with their disenfranchisement.

From the beginning of the PBA’s construction, even Victor Horta expressed concern about the theatrical exclusivity projected in the name of the building. Although he consciously avoided any explicit political affiliation, Horta’s designs for the private homes of many leading socialist politicians and his alignment with the Parti Ouvrier Belge through the commission of

⁶⁸For Le Bœuf’s letter, see “La Signification et le rôle du Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles,” *Cahiers de Belgique*, special edition dedicated to the PBA (June 1928): 3–4.

⁶⁹Fernand Rousseau, *Marche des snobs* (Brussels: J. Buyst, 1924), housed at the Archives de l’Art Moderne, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels.

the Maison du Peuple suggests that he shared sympathies, if not political convictions, with the Belgian socialism of the period. He protested the use of the term “palais” for the project:

‘Palais’? non pas dans ma pensée: simple maison d’art. [...] [J]e trouvais l’expression ‘Maison d’Art’ plus appropriée que ‘Palais’ qui ne fut employé que pour rendre plus ‘expressive’ l’œuvre à envoyer au Parlement... mais qui s’imposa à la Société Nouvelle du fait des plans déposés et du contrat conclu avec l’Etat. Ainsi le hasard consacra le terme, qui est actuellement passé dans les us et coutumes au point qu’il serait vain de songer à changer quoi que soit à cet état de choses.⁷⁰

In 1928, Lucien Solvay, accused the directorship of being a “clan” that practiced favoritism thus limiting the opportunities of Belgian artists to benefit from the new space. He wrote:

cette administration que fait-elle de son propre mouvement, pour les artistes belges?... Elle l’a annoncé: elle réservera toute son attention, toute sa sollicitude à ceux qui cultivent l’art d’après-demain, à l’avant-garde si vous voulez. Les honneurs qu’elle nous a servis, qu’elle nous sert encore, en ce moment même (voyez la jeune peinture espagnole et les autres, qu’elle protège et dont elle entend nous régler) en sont la preuve, hélas! suffisamment éloquente. Hors de cela, elle ne veut rien connaître. Elle se pose fièrement en succursale du Centaure.⁷¹

The Galeries Centaure, to which Solvay referred, was located on the fashionable Avenue Louise, just outside the city center and was viewed as one of the most fashionable and exclusive artistic venues in the city.⁷²

Furthermore, Hermann Closson, an outspoken critic of the Société Philharmonique wrote in 1933 in *L’Indépendance belge*:

⁷⁰Horta, *Mémoires*, 243.

⁷¹L. Solvay, “Au Palais des Beaux-Arts,” *La Gazette*, 27 December 1928. Quoted in Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 163.

⁷²Records and correspondence concerning the gallery and its directors can be found in the Fonds Schwarzenberg, Archives de l’Art Moderne, Bibliothèque des Musées des Beaux-Arts, Brussels. Among the highlights of the Centaure’s programming was the first exhibition of Marc Chagall’s art in 1923–24, a show of Leon Baskt’s designs for the stage in 1926, and Marc Chagall’s *Les fables de la Fontaine* in 1929–30. Solvay wrote of the Centaure’s directors that they were not as much bent on creating something new, but on avoiding the old (Lucien Solvay, *La Gazette*, 23 October 1921. Press clipping, Fonds Schwarzenberg, No. 36.289). The Centaure went bankrupt in 1932.

Nous nous sommes déjà permis de protester contre le snobisme vestimentaire qui envahit le Palais des Beaux-Arts. Les organisateurs de concert s'en servent (ils ont raison à leur point de vue) en annonçant des 'galas' qui, pensent-ils, attireront les amateurs de ces démonstrations. Libre à chacun, évidemment. Il est possible que plus on est beau, mieux on comprend et qu'en arborant leurs plaques et leurs rubans en sautoir, les hauts fonctionnaires retraités et les membres du corps diplomatique comprendraient encore mieux une sonate. Mais il faut laisser chacun libre. Or, une annonce du concert Menuhin était ainsi libellée: 'RECITAL MENUHIN—TOILETTE DE SOIREE'. Pour protester, nous sommes venu en veston. Nous croyons avoir compris tout de même...⁷³

Accusations of elitism, coupled with the international economic crisis, highlighted tension between the post-war optimism and national determination and the new set of problems that the Great Depression presented to the nation. An article in *Pourquoi Pas?* from 20 November 1931 outlined the need for a reconception of the project in light of the economic context of the early 1930s:

Ces grandes ambitions, comme la construction elle-même du Palais des Beaux-Arts, participation de cette fièvre mégalomane dont tout le pays fut saisi au lendemain de la guerre. Rien n'était assez beau, rien n'était assez grand pour la Belgique reconstituée et décidée à jouer un grand rôle international. Hélas! il a fallu en rebattre. La crise du Palais des Beaux-Arts est, dans une large mesure, une conséquence de la crise générale et le repliement sur nous-mêmes auquel nous sommes condamnés. La Belgique mondiale redevient une Belgique très belge, très modestement belge, et les expositions désertent le Palais Horta pour retourner aux vieux Cercles Artistiques.⁷⁴

Shifts in the Organization of Brussels's Musical Life

Another recurring criticism of the PBA echoed earlier concerns that there were simply too many concert societies and performances for the limited audiences in Brussels. This had been a problem even in before World War I, as the rivalry between the Concerts Populaires and the Concerts d'Hiver in the late 1880s had illustrated so acutely (see chapter 2). Louis Piérard questioned the prudence of the design of the PBA in May 1928: "Dans une ville comme

⁷³Hermann Closson, *L'Indépendance Belge*, 7 January 1933. Quoted in Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 166.

⁷⁴*Pourquoi pas?* 20 November 1931. Quoted in Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 168.

Bruxelles, dans un pays comme la Belgique, y a-t-il de quoi alimenter une aussi formidable entreprise (trois ou quatre salles de concert, quarante salles d'exposition)? Trouvera-t-on un public suffisant?"⁷⁵ The problem's practical side becomes apparent in a letter to Béla Bartók, dated 14 October 1930, in which the impresario Gaston Verhuyck bemoaned the problem of too many concerts in Brussels, exacerbated by the competition with the powerful PBA. He blamed the PBA as one of the reasons why he anticipated difficulties in scheduling a concert of Bartók's music: "Cette année les engagements d'exécutions de musique moderne ont été très difficiles à réaliser en Belgique à cause des modifications apportées à l'organisation de notre vie musicale. Cette situation dure déjà depuis deux ans d'ailleurs et se complique du fait de la crise économique et de la pléthore de concerts."⁷⁶

In the design for the PBA, the focus for the spaces dedicated to music was squarely on creating acoustically superior concert halls. With the TRM and other theaters in the lower city less than a kilometer away, it made sense for the planners to concentrate their energies on creating a new home for concert music, leaving theatrical productions to these already-established theaters. But, as Horta recalled in his *Mémoires*, a modification of the plans for the Salle de Musique de Chambre to allow for scenery for theatrical productions was briefly considered during construction.⁷⁷ Although the modifications were not realized in full because of

⁷⁵Louis Piérard, "Inauguration du Palais des Beaux-Arts," *Le Peuple*, 5 May 1928. Quoted in Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 155.

⁷⁶Gaston Verhuyck to Béla Bartók, 14 October 1930. Fonds Gaston Verhuyck, Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique/Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België (KBR), MS467/1/23. Cited in Yves Lenoir, "À propos de quelques documents du Fonds Gaston Verhuyck," *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 35, no. 1 (1993–1994): 155.

⁷⁷The structure of the building, and the soil on which it was built, however, did not allow for such a modification, and the plan was dropped. Horta, *Mémoires*, 263–68. During the process of decorating the Salle de Musique de Chambre, relations between Horta and Le Bœuf deteriorated again, after having smoothed over their differences regarding the planning of the acoustics for the Grande Salle. Le Bœuf assigned the task to the painter Creten-Georges and the decorator Leroy rather than to Horta, whose designs always included interior decoration. Horta

structural and acoustic considerations, the smaller hall in the PBA hosted many staged productions that garnered more attention than those at the TRM. The traveling French theater company, La Petite Scène, used the Salle de Musique de Chambre for their performances at the Palais des Beaux-Arts during the 1928–29 season.⁷⁸ Their season included Carlos Pedrell’s *La Guitare*, Honegger’s *Roses en Métal*, alongside an opéra-comique by Gluck, and Honegger’s *Roses en Metal*. Likewise, Serge Lifar and the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo offered programs in 1932, and the Vlaamse Volkstooneel, a Flemish radical theater troupe, made regular appearances on the stage there (for more on the VVT, see Chapter 4). The PBA’s productions attracted more discussion in the press than did the new works at the TRM. In fact, the staged performances at the TRM pushed the opera house to the margins of critical discourse.

The availability of the new concert spaces at the PBA motivated a geographical centralization of concert series more readily than an administrative merger under the Société Philharmonique. Many concert series that were not part of Le Bœuf’s organization moved to the PBA from the much smaller auditorium at the Conservatoire. These included Désiré Defauw’s “festivals”, which featured such singers as Lina Falik and Sabine Kalter, the pianist Alexandre Uninsky, and the violinist Jacques Thibeault. His entire 1932–33 season was held in the Grande Salle de Musique, and presented concerts devoted to Wagner, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, and Strauss. Even the Concerts Ysaÿe began to use the PBA, which brought Alexandre Brailowsky, Yehudi Menuhin, Pablo Casals, and others to the PBA.⁷⁹

refused to attend the opening concert in the new hall as a result. In 1929, however, Horta agreed to return to the PBA project to prepare the decoration of the Grande Salle.

⁷⁸“Note détaillée sur le Théâtre Ambulant de la Petite Scène,” ASPH, Box 2.

⁷⁹Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 189.

Gradually, however, Le Bœuf and his collaborators at the Société Philharmonique were able to centralize the administration of many of the city's concert organizations under a single managing authority. In this way, Le Bœuf's earlier vision of the musical life of the city emerged as a reality. The stories of the Galerie Centaure, the Concerts Pro Arte, and the Concerts Spirituels in the period between 1930 and 1936 show the impact of the centralizing impulse on the city.

The Galerie Centaure, which had received criticism from many fronts for its elitism and narrowly modernist aesthetics, went bankrupt in 1932, prompting *Les Beaux-Arts* to solicit the opinions of those who were involved in the project about its failure. An art critic for *Journal des Débats*, for instance, wrote that the bankruptcy was not indicative of the failure of cubism, fauvism, expressionism, or surrealism, but rather the unfortunate result of the economic depression, since the gallery was first and foremost a place of commerce. Lucien Solvay, offering his opinion on the gallery, wrote of its failure:

Le mouvement esthétique avec lequel le *Centaure* s'était identifié, pour me servir poliment des termes mêmes de votre enquête, a eu pour effet de dégoûter le public de la peinture, bonne ou mauvaise. Effet très regrettable évidemment. Forcé de choisir entre la laideur centauresque et la banalité de la peinture d'amateurs, il est à craindre qu'il a demandé finalement à celle-ci des consolations... Et ainsi, en voulant sauver l'art de la peinture, l'Art vivant l'aura tué.⁸⁰

Art critics Richard Dupiérreux (for *Le Soir*) and André de Ridder (for *Sélection*) protested the wording of *Les Beaux-Arts*'s questionnaire, writing that the implied connection between the failure of the gallery and the failure of modern art was a false one, and that new art would continue to develop even without the Centaure. In fact, art critics took the opportunity to attack the system of contracts with artists that Centaure had set up to ensure a virtual monopoly on new painting. However, the failure of the Centaure project also demonstrated, by contrast, the power

⁸⁰“Enquête sur l'activité de la Galerie le Centaure,” *Les Beaux-Arts*, 28 October 1932.

of the PBA and the protection that its affiliate organizations offered to modern music that could not be secured by independent institutions.

Like the Centaure, the Concerts Pro Arte had begun to feel the effects of the Depression in 1930. Collaer and Le Bœuf conceived of a solution that was to benefit both the chamber music series and the Société Philharmonique (see chapter 2). Charles Fabri, the president of the Concerts Spirituels, treated the deterioration of the Concerts Pro Arte as a cautionary tale. At the end of the 1932–33 season, the Concerts Spirituels were struggling with their finances. Just as it had folded the Concerts Pro Arte into its organization, the Société Philharmonique took on the organization of the Concerts Spirituels beginning in the 1933–34 season. Joseph Jongen, Louis de Vocht, and Maurice Weynant conducted. A fourth non-subscription concert, a performance of the *Missa Solemnis* also took place.⁸¹ The Société Philharmonique proposed a one-year agreement between the two organizations on 29 August 1933. The Orchestre Symphonique de Bruxelles would perform orchestral parts, and the choir of the Concerts Spirituels would continue to provide the choral forces. An executive board would bring together three representatives from the Société Philharmonique and three from the Concerts Spirituels.⁸² Fabri presented his conditions to the board on 7 December 1933, and wrote to Le Bœuf shortly afterwards to inform him that the board refused the Société Philharmonique’s terms, which by that point also included veto power for all concerts by the Concerts Spirituels, as well as the right to appoint conductors and soloists for the concerts.⁸³

⁸¹Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 190.

⁸²“Entente avec les Concerts Spirituels,” 29 August 1933, ASPH, Box 7.

⁸³Charles Fabri to Le Bœuf, undated. ASPH, Box 7.

At the same time that Collaer was struggling with the finances of the Concerts Pro Arte and their integration into the Société Philharmonique, he launched a new concert series, the Société de Musique Ancienne et Nouvelle, independent of the Pro Arte. For the first season of the new series (1933–34), Collaer considered a wide-ranging program, including works by Monteverdi, Schütz, and Purcell side-by-side with new works. In a letter to Le Bœuf, he asked if a collaboration with the Concerts Populaires would be possible in order to arrange for performances of Igor Markevitch's *L'Envol d'Icare*, Stravinsky's *Les Noces*, and Charles Koechlin's *La Course du printemps*.⁸⁴ While Collaer's proposal might appear to contradict his sentiments about Le Bœuf and the Société Philharmonique, it demonstrates the long-reaching arm of Le Bœuf and his society. In order to realize his ambitions to program these works, Collaer needed an orchestra, and the Société Philharmonique could provide one.

In 1933, two years after Charles Leirens was replaced with Paul Giron as general director of the PBA, he founded his own Maison d'Art on Avenue Louise. It was a smaller artistic center where Leirens was free of the limitations imposed by the PBA. He offered concerts and lectures, as well as a chance for audiences to “connaître l'homme après avoir applaudi l'artiste.”⁸⁵ Although the intimate setting was a far cry from the pageantry of the PBA, the goals of the new circle were reminiscent of those at the PBA, and echoed the most common themes in interwar musical culture in Brussels: it called for Belgian cultural unity as well as for Belgians to experience connections to the international community. The intimate setting appeared to be just what the PBA was missing and what audiences with a genuine interest in modernism (rather than the “snobs” who frequented the PBA) were looking for. Leirens described his new Cercle de

⁸⁴Paul Collaer to Henry Le Bœuf, 1 October 1933. ASPH, Box 8.

⁸⁵“Chronique de la Maison d'Art et du Cercle de l'Avenue,” *Les Beaux-Arts*, 5 January 1934. Cited Vausort, *Charles Leirens*, 10.

l’Avenue (which met at the Maison d’Art): “Cette nouvelle association a été créée dans le but de multiplier les contacts entre Belges, et de permettre à ses membres de participer de façon plus étroite à la vie internationale et aux transformations, aussi rapides que profondes, qui s’opèrent actuellement.”⁸⁶ As the programming of the Société Philharmonique took a turn toward standard nineteenth-century repertoire—a move inspired in part by Giron’s financial overhaul—Leirens intended for his group to take up the torch of modern music that the PBA had abandoned. It was at Leirens’s concerts, and not the Société Philharmonique, that Walter Gieseking, Arthur Schnabel, Robert Cassadesus, Rudolf Serkin, and Marian Anderson made their Brussels debuts. Other musicians at these concerts included Nadia Boulanger (conducting Mondeverdi madrigals), the Kolisch Quartet, and the Budapest Quartet. Some of the outstanding performances there included Berg’s violin concerto, Hindemith’s *Mathis der Mahler*, and Bartók’s *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*.⁸⁷ The German flavor of many of Leirens’s concerts distinguished them from the earlier Concerts Pro Arte, where these kind of works would have been performed in the 1920s. Although the public Maison d’Art concerts were well-received in the press, the new circle was not financially sustainable. After using his own money to fund the programs, Leirens was forced to close down the Cercle de l’Avenue after the 1937–38 season. The Maison d’Art continued offering private concerts for the new “Société de Musique de Chambre de la Maison d’Art.”⁸⁸

⁸⁶Les Beaux-Arts, 29 September 1933. Quoted in Vausort, *Charles Leirens*, 71.

⁸⁷Vausort, *Charles Leirens*, 73. See also Robert Wangermée, “La vie musicale à Bruxelles. D’une guerre à l’autre,” in *Au bonheur des musiciens: 150 ans de vie musicale à Bruxelles*, ed. Daniel Commins, Michel Debrocq, Célestin Deliège, et al. (Brussels: Société Philharmonique de Bruxelles, 1997), 65.

⁸⁸Vausort, *Charles Leirens*, 72. Leirens continued to be involved in musical pursuits in Brussels, at the Maison d’Art, and in other organizations. From 1936 until 1940, he was the head of musicology at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d’Architecture et des Arts Décoratifs in Brussels. He also founded, with Jean Absil, the *Revue Internationale de Musique*, published in Brussels from 1938–40 and 1950–52. During World War II, he worked with

Although they found success in the pages of the press, ventures such as Collaer's Concerts Modernes et Anciens and Leirens's Maison d'Art posed no real threat to the dominance of the PBA as the musical center of the city. The radio, however, presented at once possibilities and challenges to the PBA and the Société Philharmonique. Several radio stations had been broadcasting regularly since the early 1920s, including Radio Bruxelles and Radio-Catholique Belge. These were relatively small operations compared to the Société Philharmonique at the PBA. In 1930, however, the new Institut National Belge de Radiodiffusion (INR), was created with a substantial state subvention to cover the majority of its operating costs. The new radio company boasted both a symphony orchestra and a smaller "orchestre radio" designated to play popular ballet excerpts, operettas, and symphonic jazz. Conductor Franz André, who had been the violinist for the Trio de la Station for Radio Bruxelles, was named musical director.⁸⁹

The Palais des Beaux-Arts was equipped with radio transmitters, and Le Bœuf hoped to see the PBA as the seat of the newly formed INR—undoubtedly to continue his project of centralization on musical life in Brussels—and, with the reach of broadcasting beyond the capital city, to extend his influence even further. When the INR instead planned to build their new headquarters at Place Flagey, Le Bœuf formulated a plan that would cost the state nothing to broadcast concerts from the new venue.⁹⁰ In a letter to Adolphe Max, Le Bœuf insisted on the advantage of his plan: "Remarque en même temps que cette conception accentue le rôle national du Palais des Beaux-Arts qui sera beaucoup plus un organisme créé pour le pays que pour

the Princesse de Ligne to create the Concerts du Midi at the Musée d'Art Ancien. In 1942, he emigrated to the United States, where he was professor of musicology and photography at the New School for Social Research.

⁸⁹Robert Wangermée, "La vie musicale au studio 4 de la maison de la radio," in *Studio 4: Maison de la Radio, Flagey 1933–2002*, ed. Jos Vandembreden and Robert Wangermée (Brussels: Académie Royale de Belgique-CIVA, 2004), 49–50.

⁹⁰Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 86–87.

Bruxelles seul.”⁹¹ Le Bœuf brokered a contract between the INR and the PBA, under which the Société Philharmonique would provide music for a fee of 3,500,000 francs and thirty percent of any INR profits over 10,000,000 francs. A “Comité Radio-Phil,” with a president and two members representing the Radio and the Société Philharmonique, would oversee the partnership.⁹² But in addition to the PBA concerts, the INR was also broadcasting its own concert series, creating direct competition with the smaller concert organizations under the umbrella of the Société Philharmonique. Le Bœuf insisted that these organizations should receive subsidies to protect them in the face of such asymmetrical competition.⁹³

The theme of the 1932 meeting of the Fédération Internationale des Concerts in Brussels was the role of the radio in musical life. Le Bœuf delivered an address to the assembly that focused on his concerns about radio. Much of what he said revealed his anxiety that the radio would undo his work to centralize music under the leadership of the Société Philharmonique. Le Bœuf emphasized the value of live performance and live audiences, pointing out that the “communion” between performer and audience was in jeopardy with the advent of radio concerts. The complex web of relationships that were inherent in the enterprise of broadcasting concerts concerned him: more people might be likely to stay home instead of going to concerts; the solution of lowering prices might attract more people, but would also cut receipts; to refuse to broadcast concerts at all would be against the philosophy of promoting good music. The solution Le Bœuf offered was a partnership between radio and concert organizations that would be mutually beneficial—the model that the Société Philharmonique and the I.N.R. established.

⁹¹Henry Le Bœuf to Adolphe Max, 11 December 1928. Quoted in Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 87. Emphasis in the original.

⁹²“Convention entre l’I.N.R. et le Palais des Beaux-Arts (P.B.A) concernant la radiodiffusion,” undated, ASPH, Box 2.

⁹³Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 87.

The radio should support the live concerts financially and in turn earn the right to broadcast these concerts.⁹⁴ Although this agreement continued, by 1936, when the headquarters at Place Flagey were completed and the INR was re-organized into the French and Flemish branches, many of the key actors in Belgian musical life had become involved in broadcasting at the INR. Concerts there began to overshadow those at the PBA for their cosmopolitan flavor and their focus on new music.

Brussels after Le Bœuf

In addition to the regular season in 1934–35, Brussels was preparing for the Exposition Universelle. Given Le Bœuf's position at the head of the Société Philharmonique, it made sense for the commissaire générale of the Exposition de Bruxelles 1935, Count Adrien van der Bruch, to call upon Le Bœuf to coordinate the music for the exposition.⁹⁵ Once again, the Palais des Beaux-Arts was front and center in the musical planning. In a June 1934 article, the writer Milly commented:

Toutes ces personnes sont extrêmement sympathiques; M. Le Bœuf est un homme charmant, dévoué à l'art musical plus qu'on ne saurait le dire; M. Closson est fortement appelé sur les instruments d'autrefois; M. Collaer joue admirablement du piano et adore la musique de Strawinsky et de Hindemith, et les autres disent 'amen' à tout ce que dit et fait LE PALAIS DES BEAUX-ARTS. On peut même affirmer que cette commission, et toutes les autres qu'ont l'art musical dans leurs attributions, SONT LA PURE EMANATION DE CE BIEN HEUREUX PALAIS—OU, SI VOUS AIMEZ MIEUX, DE LA SOCIETE PHILHARMONIQUE.⁹⁶

⁹⁴Henry Le Bœuf, "La Radio-Diffusion dans ses rapports avec les organisations de concerts. Rapport présenté par M. H. Le Bœuf au Congrès de Bruxelles de la Fédération Internationale des Concerts," December 1932, ASPH, Box 6.

⁹⁵Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 101.

⁹⁶Milly, *La Gazette*, 25 June 1934. Quoted in Régulus, "'Cuisine Musicale' ou l'organisation des concerts en Belgique. Plat du Jour..." *Gazette Musicale de Belgique et revue de tous les arts* 1, no. 19 (15 July 1934): 1–2. Emphasis in the original.

Milly continued, lamenting the fact that given the proclivities of the Palais des Beaux-Arts, there would be no Belgian music at the 1935 exposition. Milly concluded:

Nous avons une triste manie, en Belgique: celle de dénigrer nos compatriotes et tout ce qu'ils font bien. Quand l'étranger nous sous-estime, nous sommes furieux; mais entre nous, nous nous déchirons sans pitié. En France, c'est tout le contraire; rien n'est beau, rien n'est grand, que l'art français, la musique française, la peinture française, la musique française, la peinture française. Ecoutez un Français, ou lisez-le: la France est la lumière du monde, et tous les Français sont des surhommes. Ils sont pires en cela que les Allemands. Comme ils ont raison! On finit par les croire, tant ils crient fort. Que ne les imitons-nous pas! Ils sont nationalistes. *Le nationalisme en art n'est pas une hérésie; c'est une force.* Nous avons vu l'autre jour Peter Benoît le proclamer, le démontrer, comme le firent dans leurs œuvres Beethoven, Wagner, Weber, Moussorgski. En musique plus encore qu'en peinture. Camille Lemonnier, dont on rappelait à son tour la mémoire, l'autre semaine, a écrit là-dessus des pages émouvantes.⁹⁷

Le Bœuf, however, died unexpectedly in early 1935, leaving Cuvelier to take over both the Société Philharmonique and the music program for the Exposition. Between April and November, Brussels hosted over two hundred and twenty concerts as part of the fair.

Although Cuvelier had worked closely with Le Bœuf and their musical collaborators for over eight years by that point, the transition in the administration of the Société Philharmonique was not a smooth one. As early as July of 1935, Cuvelier's letters to General Buffin reflect his struggles to maintain the centralized control that Le Bœuf had established. Cuvelier complained that Defauw had programmed the Beethoven violin concerto with Bronsilaw Huberman as soloist eight days before the Société Philharmonique's concert with the same work performed by Alphonse Onnou, as well as Bach's cantata "Ich will den Kreuzstab tragen" (BWV 56) with Swiss baritone Charles Panzera even though the Société Philharmonique had been negotiating with Panzera to conduct the same work on their program. Cuvelier concluded, "Vous voyez que l'entente entre les concerts ne dépend pas de nous seulement, que le fait de communiquer nos

⁹⁷Ibid., 3.

solistes et nos programmes à Defauw ne sert uniquement pour lui qu'à en tirer un parti contre nous."⁹⁸

In March 1936, Ernest Closson resigned from the Conseil d'Administration, declaring that Cuvelier, instead of making the necessary changes in the society, had continued to support the status quo, where "en raison des habitudes acquise et de la composition même du comité, dans lequel les uns s'identifient à Cuvelier, tandis que les autres ne disent rein, par nature,— le président mis à part."⁹⁹ In a personal letter to Buffin in April 1936, he explained his decision:

les séances du comité des Philharmoniques ne soient que les séances d'entraînement mais je dois bien maintenir le mot, qui me paraît qualifier fidèlement le caractère de nos délibérations. Comme je vous le disais, il s'agit d'une situation permanent, ce qui depuis longtemps me mettait mal à l'aise et me faisait me demander: Fait-il rester? Je me souviendrai toujours que du temps même de Le Bœuf, une seule fois, et dans une circonstance où je savais avoir raison, j'ai élevé une protestations discrète [...] et Le Bœuf me répondit sous un ton tel que désormais je me résolus à me taire—mais je n'ai pas besoin de dire dans quel sentiment.

Cuvelier n'a jamais eu ces procédés, qui ne sont ni dans son caractère, ni dans ses moyens. Mais la situation n'en reste pas moins la même, en raison des habitudes acquises et de la composition même du comité, dans lequel les uns s'identifient à Cuvelier, tandis que les autres ne disent rien, par nature,— le Président mis à part. [...] l'esprit fut toujours le même et il continuera à se manifester, les positions restant les mêmes. [...] Au comité des Philharmoniques, je serai remplacé facilement par une personnalité plus conforme.¹⁰⁰

Closson's official letter of resignation, dated 31 March 1936, refers to Collaer's decision to leave the council. Closson continued by comparing Le Bœuf's forceful personality as the director with Cuvelier's persona as the new head of the Société Philharmonique:

L'autorité sans borne d'Henry Le Bœuf, sa connaissance des choses d'art, les services immenses rendus par lui à la culture musicale en Belgique lui donnaient un droit moral au pouvoir personnel, autant que son habilité et son expérience assuraient le succès de ses combinaisons. Il n'était que de le laisser faire.

⁹⁸Marcel Cuvelier to Victor Buffin, 19 June 1935. ASPH, Box 10.

⁹⁹Montens, *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 221.

¹⁰⁰Ernest Closson to Buffin, 7 April 1936. ASPH, Box 11.

J'apprécie parfaitement l'activité et l'habileté organisatrice de Monsieur Cuvelier, avec lequel j'ai toujours entretenu les rapports les plus courtois. Je ne puis voir en lui un nouvel Henry Le Bœuf, dont l'équivalent ne se trouvera d'ailleurs pas de si tôt. La conclusion s'impose. Henry Le Bœuf malheureusement disparu, il eût fallu changer de méthode, le Comité des Philharmoniques eût dû être appelé à une vie réelle. Au lieu de cela, les procédés antérieures n'ont fait que s'accroître.¹⁰¹

It was clear after Le Bœuf's death that the delicate balance he had established among concert organizations to achieve a centralized musical culture had depended on his personality. Furthermore, as Le Bœuf's assistant, Cuvelier faced perhaps unrealistic expectations that the Société Philharmonique would continue unchanged under his direction, which is comparable to de Thoran, Van Glabbeke, and Spaak's confrontation with the legacy of Kufferath and Guidé at the TRM. It took several years for him Cuvelier his stride, creating his own programs, founding his own projects (including the international Jeunesses Musicales movement), and asserting himself as the new leader of the Société Philharmonique, but even so, Le Bœuf's shadow continued to loom large over the concert life in Brussels during the twentieth century.

¹⁰¹Ernest Closson to Victor Buffin, 31 March 1936. ASPH, Box 11.

EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION

The beginning of Marcel Cuvelier's tenure as director of the Société Philharmonique brings this story back to its starting point: the Soirées de Bruxelles in 1936. Baron Victor Buffin de Chosal, one of the festival's financial backers, helped to announce the creation of the festival in February 1936:

“Les Soirées de Bruxelles” sont un festival. Ce mot est à la mode. Tous les ans, les mélomanes sont attirés par ce mot tentateur [à] Florence, Vienne, Salzbourg, Cambridge, Bayreuth [où musiciens] leur offrent, dans des conditions d'exécution exceptionnelles, des manifestations artistiques de premier ordre. [...]

Bruxelles, qui depuis des années est devenu en centre musical important n'est pas encore suffisamment connu sous ce rapport à l'étranger, et c'est là un fait regrettable. Nous avons la conviction que notre ville mérite mieux que cette ignorance [...] Que ce soit dans le domaine de la musique, du théâtre ou de la chorégraphie, c'est à des créateurs d'aujourd'hui que le Comité des “Les Soirées de Bruxelles” s'est adressé. [...] la majorité des manifestations du Festival est consacré à l'art contemporain international.¹

Despite Buffin de Chosal's confidence in the project, the Soirées de Bruxelles took place only once, and have been all but forgotten.² Yet the story of the festival's organization and failure reveals much about musical life in Brussels in the mid-1930s. The well-meaning but ill-fated initiative to launch the project floundered because its design depended on an interwar structure of

¹“Les Soirées de Bruxelles.” *Le Soir*, 28 February 1936. In addition to events outside of the regular concert series' seasons, both the Société Philharmonique and the Concerts Defauw called concerts devoted to a single composer “festivals.” Among these one-day events were the Debussy and Wagner festivals organized by the Concerts Defauw during the winter of 1930 at the Palais des Beaux-Arts (PBA) and the Roussel festival hosted by the Société Philharmonique in February 1930.

²The festival received only passing mention in Ernest Closson and Charles Van den Borren's *La Musique en Belgique du Moyen Age à nos jours* (Brussels: La Renaissance du Livre, 1950). Valérie Montens includes an overview of the festival's program in *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts: la création d'un haut lieu de culture à Bruxelles (1928–1945)* (Brussels: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2000), 224–25.

musical life that was rapidly disappearing in the face of technological, political, social, and artistic shifts.

Although Buffin emphasized the festival's international flavor and a focus on new music, the Soirées de Bruxelles had even broader goals, which mirrored the initiatives of the regular concert series in Brussels. The organizers pledged to support the work of living Belgian composers, offer performances of early music, and program favorites from the standard repertoire. Following on the heels of the musical successes at the 1935 World's Fair in Brussels, and coinciding with the annual Foire Commercial in Brussels, the organizers had high expectations for their new festival.³ They guaranteed that the Soirées de Bruxelles would attract international attention to the city's musical life.⁴

In a city where critics were already complaining that audiences were “oversaturated” with musical performances, however, the festival faced financial difficulties, hostile critical reactions, and competition from other musical organizations. From its inception through the gradual abandonment of more installations after 1936, the festival's story is indicative of the conditions at the end of a period marked by intense activity and the fostering of new music that had depended on a specific set of conditions and personalities.

³The annual commercial fair took place for two weeks in the spring beginning in 1919.

⁴The choice of the name for the festival may have been a nod to the Count Etienne de Beaumont's Soirées de Paris, which took place at the Théâtre de la Cigale in Paris from 1923 until the beginning of World War II. Beaumont's enthusiasm for modern art and music was well-known, and he and his wife commissioned works from Satie and Poulenc. Among the musicians who performed for the Beaumonts were Ricardo Viñes, Marcelle Meyer, and Jane Bathori. During World War II, their salon continued, under the title Centre d'Echanges Artistiques et de Culture Française. It was there that Olivier Messiaen gave the second performance of his *Quatour pour la fin du temps* in 1942. For more on the Beaumonts, see Myriam Chimènes, *Mécènes et musiciens: du salon au concert à Paris sous la III^e République* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 155–61.

The 1936 Festival

Shortly before the end of the 1935 Exposition, Cuvelier and his collaborators began to form their plans for the Soirées de Bruxelles.⁵ The festival was to be a culmination of the musical initiatives in the city, both a celebration of Brussels' cultural life for natives and a window into it for outsiders. Cuvelier insisted that the Soirées de Bruxelles was the only festival to “présenter [...] à un public international, curieux des tendances d'aujourd'hui, une sorte de panorama des œuvres les plus représentatives et les plus marquantes de notre époque.”⁶ At the same time, he also maintained that: “Il est évidemment difficile de le réaliser uniquement dans cette tendance, mais étayé par quelques grandes manifestations classiques il est susceptible d'intéresser un public international.”⁷ This balance of new and familiar music continued the Société Philharmonique's tradition of building concert programs that paired new works with standard nineteenth-century repertoire to ensure audience attendance. Though many of the participants in the Soirées also participated in the International Society for Contemporary Music's (ISCM) annual festivals, Cuvelier omitted any reference to these celebrations of modern music. The ISCM meetings, after all, had a very different character from music festivals that are geared toward a general public.

⁵In one of the first interviews Cuvelier gave about the Soirées, he cited the success of Hermann Scherchen's 1935 Session d'Enseignement in Brussels as the inspiration for the Soirées. T., “Pour rendre à Bruxelles l'allure d'une grande Capitale: Ce que sera la Saison d'Art et d'Elégance de 1936,” *Le Soir*, 28 January 1936.

⁶“Interview[sic] de Monsieur Marcel Cuvelier, directeur du Comité exécutif des ‘Soirées de Bruxelles,’” 22 April 1936, transcription of radio interview, Archives de la Société Philharmonique (ASPh), Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Box 13/66. The concept of presenting a “panorama” of new music echoes Paul Collaer's idea to create an “anthology” of works of the most significant composers of the time for the first season of his Concerts Pro Arte in Brussels. Program for the 13 November 1922 concert, quoted in Robert Wagnermée, “Paul Collaer, les Concerts Pro Arte et la musique du XX^e siècle,” *Bulletin de la Classe des Beaux-Arts* 6, no. 2 (1991): 26–27.

⁷“Bilan des Soirées de Bruxelles” [undated, earlier version], ASPh Box 13/66. This section of the report was deleted in a later version in favor of a passage that emphasizes the festival's orientation toward new music. A year later, Cuvelier addressed the question of attracting audiences in a presentation in Florence, using the Soirées as a case study for his argument that new music must be balanced with familiar repertoire in order to attract and establish a loyal audience for a concert series. See “Les relations entre la musique contemporaine et le public, considérés avec l'organisation de manifestations musicales,” *Atti del secondo congresso di musica, Firenze, Maggio 1937* (Florence: Felice le Monier, 1937).

While the conception of the Soirées and the festivals at Bayreuth, Salzburg, Munich, Florence, and Lucerne were all inextricably linked to the character of the cities where they take place and the makeup of their audiences, the ISCM festival occurred in a different city each year. The ISCM was designed to attract professional musicians, rather than the general public.⁸

A core group of organizers collaborated with Cuvelier in defining the festival's goals and organizing the performances. German conductor Hermann Scherchen, was instrumental in preparing the programs, directing rehearsals, and conducting most of the performances. Paul Collaer took on the responsibility of overseeing the performances of early music. Writer Joseph Weterings (1904–67), the author of the libretto for Albert Roussel's *Ænéas* and translator for the French-language version of Arnold Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, both of which were performed during the 6 May Soirée des ballets, brought literary prestige to the board of directors. Mayor Adolphe Max offered the city's patronage. In fact, his role as president of the honorary committee placed him in the path of Belgian critics of the festival, which I discuss below. The festival's long list of financial supporters, or "members," included foreign ambassadors, influential patrons, Belgian aristocrats, financiers, industrialists, and musicians. Table 7.1 lists the administrative committees, as well as some of the most important subscribers.

⁸Jacques Feschotte, *Les Hautes-Lieux de la Musique* (Paris: Société d'Éditions Françaises et Internationales, 1950), 11–13. In his sociology of music festivals, Julien Besançon identifies three criteria for a successful music festival, one of which is a thematic unity among the events. In the case of the Soirées de Bruxelles, the stated focus on new music was the unifying concept. Besançon's other two criteria are centralization of the events, and a defined, relatively short period within which the festival occurs. Julien Besançon, *Festival de Musique. Analyse sociologique de la programmation et de l'organisation* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), 49.

Table 7.1– Committees and Members of the Soirées de Bruxelles**A) Comité de Collaboration, responsible for the organization of the festival⁹**

Committee	Members
Comité permanent	Marcel Cuvelier (president), Baron J. Van den Branden de Reeth (secretary), Paul Collaer, Joseph Weterings
Comité musical	Hermann Scherchen, André Souris, Léon Jongen, Charles Hens, Léonide Katchourowsky, Paul Collaer, Joseph Weterings, Marcel Cuvelier, J. Van den Branden de Reeth
Comité de Propagande et de Publicité	Paul Collaer, Marcel Cuvelier, Joseph Weterings, J. van den Branden de Reeth, M. McInnes, Un allemand, Un journaliste universitaire, Un délégué du tourisme
Comité pour la décoration, peinture, etc.	Marcel Cuvelier, Joseph Weterings, Paul Collaer, J. Van den Branden de Reeth, E.L.T. Mesens, Léon Spillaert, Jean Brusselmans, Thylla Janlet

B) Selected list of Subscribers to the Soirées de Bruxelles¹⁰

Count Carl de Kerchove de Denterghem	Belgian diplomat
Count and Countess Philippe d'Oultremont and Countess Henri d'Oultremont	Belgian noble family
Georges Vaxelaire	Director of the Grands Magasins Au Bon Marché (Belgian department store); playwright and librettist
Adolphe Stoclet	Industrialist and financier; patron of the arts in Brussels
Baron Henri de Traux de Wardin	Private secretary to Queen Elisabeth of Belgium
Minister Maurice Lippens	Industrialist; Minister d'Etat
Baron Buffin de Chosal	President of the Société Philharmonique de Bruxelles
Désiré Defauw	Director of the Concerts du Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles; Director of the Concerts Defauw
Edmond Glesener	Director of the Beaux-Arts au Ministre de l'Instruction
Joseph Jongen	Director of the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles; composer
Princes Edmond de Polignac	Parisian music patron
Henry Prunières	Director of <i>La Revue musicale de Paris</i>
Maurice Ravel	Composer
Maurice van Soust de Borkenfeld	Director General of the Institut National de Radiodiffusion
Corneil de Thoran	Director of the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie

⁹ASPh, Box 14/90.¹⁰ASPh, Box 16/Soirées de Bruxelles, Divers.

In the earliest extant letter about the Soirées, dated September 5, 1935, Cuvelier presented his plans for the festival.¹¹ He envisioned an ambitious program, the scope of which reached far beyond the festival's stated focus on new music. Cuvelier hoped to bring famous composers, conductors, and performers to the city and to solicit the participation of the most prestigious artistic organizations in Brussels. He secured performances by the Vienna Boys' Choir, Hugo Reichenberger, and Herbert van Karajan, among others. He ensured collaboration with the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, by insisting on the mutual benefit of such a partnership.¹² Cuvelier also worked out agreements with national broadcasting companies across Europe to air performances abroad, including with the BBC, the Emissions de la Radiodiffusion in Paris, Radio-Prague, and Radio-Luxembourg.¹³

New music in the final program for the 1936 festival included the first French-language performance of Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, which had premiered in Prague twelve years earlier, a revival of Albert Roussel's ballet *Ænéas*, and Igor Stravinsky's *Les Noces*. Each of these works had been established as influential modern pieces before 1936. Cuvelier also folded the Jeunesses 1936, a composition competition, into the festival's program. Le Bœuf had established this annual competition shortly before his death. The festival offered an international platform for the performance of that year's entries. Some of the works on the festival's schedule had been proposed as options for regular concerts. Collaer proposed Berg's *Der Wein* (in French translation as *Le Vin*), for instance, as a replacement for Stravinsky's *Les Noces* for the Société

¹¹The preliminary program includes Stravinsky's *Les Noces*, Markevitch's *Paradis Perdu*, as well as unspecified ballets by de Falla, Honegger, Souris, and Honegger. ASPH, Box 15/75.

¹²Marcel Cuvelier to Corneil de Thoran, 13 September 1935. ASPH, Box 13/66; Cuvelier to de Thoran, 24 October 1935. ASPH, Box 10/24.

¹³See letters dated 18 February 1936, to these radio companies, ASPH Box 11/33.

Philharmonique's 1933–34 season.¹⁴ Table 7.2 shows the complete schedule of performances for the Soirées, which took place between 23 April and 8 May 1936.

Table 7.2– Schedule of Performances for the Soirées de Bruxelles, 1936

Date	Title	Venue	Performers	Program
23 April	Spectacle d'Ouverture	TRM	Hugo Reichenberger (conductor of the Vienna Opera)	Beethoven, <i>Fidelio</i> (performed in German)
25 April	Gala au profit du dispensaire des artistes	Palais des Beaux- Arts (PBA), grande salle	Wiener Sangerknaben Léopold Emmer, conductor	
26 April		PBA grande salle	Hélène Fahrni, Gertrude Pizinger, Heinze Marten, Gunter Baum, Orchestra and chorus of the Städtliche Musik Verein d'Aix-la Chapelle; Herbert von Karajan , conductor	J.S. Bach, Mass in B Minor
27 April	Concert Mozart, par entente avec la société "Les amis de Salzbourg"	PBA salle de musique de chambre	Hermann Scherchen, conductor; Maneta Radwan (Opéra de Varsovie), Rachel Thauvoye (piano), Orchestre de chambre de la Société Philharmonique	Serenade no. 6, K. 239 for two chamber orchestras and timpani; <i>Juubilate exultate</i> ; Romance et variation pour instruments à vent; Rondo for soprano, piano, and orchestra; Symphony in A minor, K. 16a
28 April	Concert de musique belge (Œuvres radiophoniques)	PBA salle de musique de chambre	Orchestre de chambre de la Société Philharmonique Scherchen, conductor	Schoemaker- <i>Médée la magicienne</i> ; Poot- <i>Pièce radiophonique</i> ; de Bourguignon- <i>Congo</i> , reportage musical (text by Paul Werrie)

¹⁴Paul Collaer to Marcel Cuvelier, 16 June 1933. ASPH, Box 7.

28 April		Théâtre des Galeries (in the Galeries St Hubert)	Ludmilla and Georges Pitoëff, Raymond Dagand, Nora Sylvère, Louis Salou, Alice Dufrene, Madeleine Milhaud, Jean Hort	<i>Tu ne m'échapperais jamais</i> (French translation by Pierre Sabatier of Margaret Kennedy's <i>Escape me Never</i>); Ludmilla Pitoëf sings unpublished songs by Darius Milhaud
29 April	Les Jeunesses 1936 (Prix Henry Le Bœuf) (composition competition)	PBA grande salle	Orchestre de chambre de la Société Philharmonique, conducted by Scherchen	Hector Ponse (The Netherlands) <i>Fantaisie</i> ; Léopold Spinner (Austria)- <i>Passacaglia</i> ; Rudolph Holzmann (Germany)- <i>Septuor</i> ; Jef Van Durme (Belgium)- <i>Concerto de chambre</i>
30 April	Concert symphonique et choral	PBA grande salle	Marguerite Thys (Berg and Verdi); Marc Hadour (Ferroud); Marcelle Bunlet, Pola Flezel, Jeanne Thys, José Lens, Jules Daems, Maurice De Groote, Franz Toutenel (Verdi); Chorale Philharmonique; Orchestre Symphonique de Bruxelles; Scherchen	Mozart- <i>Musique funèbre</i> (performance dedicated to Alban Berg); Alban Berg- <i>Vin</i> (on three poems by Baudelaire); P.O. Ferroud- <i>Trois chansons de fous</i> ; Honegger- <i>Nocturne</i> ; Verdi- <i>Quattro Pezzi Sacri</i>
1 May	Gala Cinématographique	PBA grande salle		<i>La vie future</i>
2 May	Séance de musique de chambre	PBA rotunda	Trio de Winterthur	Philip Lazar- Trio Mirozlaw Pon- Trio Frank Martin- Trio
3 May	Soirée de musique et de danse Hinodues	PBA grande salle	Ballets de Menaka	
4 May	Opéras italiens		Oreste Piccardi, conductor	Cavalieri- <i>Rappresentazione di Anima e di Corpo</i> ; Monteverdi- <i>Ballo delle Ingrate</i>
5 May	Réception offerte à M. A. Max	Hôtel de ville	Pro Musica Antiqua Safford Cape, director	
6 May	Soirée de ballets	PBA	Marcelle Bunlet	Stravinsky- <i>Les Noces</i> ;

		(grande salle)	(Schoenberg); Léonide Kathourowsky (dancer); Mme. Radwan Mme Fisaal; Jules Daems; De Groote Zaludkowsky (Stravinsky); Orchestre Symphonique de Bruxelles; Scherchen	Schoenberg- <i>L'Attente</i> (French translation by Weterings); Roussel- <i>Ænéas</i> (text by Weterings)
7 May		Théâtre Flamand		<i>Ik Dlen</i> by Herman Heyermans
8 May	Soirée de Ballets	PBA grande salle	corps de ballet de la Monnaie (Françaix); Marcelle Bunlet (Markevitch); Pola Fiszal (Markevitch); José Lens (Markevitch); Chorale de la Société Philharmonique de Bruxelles; Markevitch (conducting <i>Paradis Perdu</i>); Scherchen	Françaix- <i>Le Jeu sentimental</i> (ballet); Markevitch- <i>Le Paradis Perdu</i> (oratorio); Roussel- <i>Ænéas</i>

One of the modern showpieces of the festival was Igor Stravinsky's *Les Noces*. Although Brussels audiences had heard the work in concert several times before, the Soirées de Bruxelles performance was the first fully-staged production.¹⁵ In fact, the Société Philharmonique programmed the work only two months before the festival. The corps de ballet from the TRM, which was to dance the staged version. They received an invitation from Cuvelier to go to the concert on 3 April 1936 so that they would "bien se pénétrer du rythme des *Noces*." The dancers, however, could not attend because they were performing at the opera house that night.¹⁶ Cuvelier

¹⁵The Brussels premiere took place on 21 April 1928 at the Concerts Populaires in a concert dedicated to Stravinsky's music, conducted by Ernest Ansermet.

¹⁶Marcel Cuvelier to Corneil de Thoran, 9 March 1936. ASPH Box 14/76. Leonid Kachourowsky, the principal dancer of the ballet company, choreographed *Les Noces* for the festival. Kachourowsky danced at the TRM from 1934 through the end of the 1940–41 season when the directors of the theater dismissed him because of his outspoken support of the German occupiers.

had hoped to bring Igor Stravinsky to Brussels to conduct, but the composer was unavailable.¹⁷ Instead, Théodore Stravinsky, Igor Stravinsky's son, was hired to design the sets and costumes. The question of paying him for his work, however, proved to be a delicate one. The Belgian painters Léon Spillaert and Herman Brusselmans had offered their services to the festival for free, and Cuvelier was hesitant to pay a foreigner for the same kind of work. He wrote to Weterings to explain his predicament:

Si nous proposons une somme quelconque à Théodore Strawinsky, on peut nous reprocher de nouveau de payer les étrangers et ne pas payer les Belges. D'autre part, nous avons une école de dessin suffisamment importante à Bruxelles, pour ne pas recourir aux étrangers. Je suis donc partisan que Théodore Strawinsky le fasse aux même conditions que les autres.

Stravinsky, on the other hand, reasoned that an artist who does not get to see the realizations of his stage designs in person is like a writer who does not get to see the final proofs of his book before they are sent to press.¹⁸ In April, correspondence between Cuvelier and Stravinsky reveals the festival's increasingly difficult financial situation. Stravinsky wrote to ask for reimbursement for a train ticket to Brussels so that he could inspect the sets. Cuvelier responded that it was impossible for them to pay, and that most of the composers who wanted to come to the festival to hear their works performed were paying their own way.¹⁹ The staged version of Stravinsky's work received mixed reviews, with the conservative critic, Pierre l'Angle, writing for *La Dernière heure* that even with the choreography, there was little to admire about the work, while Joseph de Geynst praised the work for its "dynamisme extraordinaire" in *La Meuse*.²⁰

¹⁷Marcel Cuvelier to Leonid Katchourowsky, 4 December 1935. ASPH, Box 14/76.

¹⁸Marcel Cuvelier to Jan Weterings, 28 October 1925. ASPH Box 14/76.

¹⁹Marcel Cuvelier to Théodore Stravinsky, 29 April 1936. ASPH 14/76.

²⁰Pierre L'Angle, "Les Soirées de Bruxelles. Séance de ballets au Palais des Beaux-Arts," *La Dernière heure*, 8 May 1936. L'Angle also pointed out that the layout of the stage in the main concert hall at the Palais des Beaux-Arts was

Albert Roussel's *Ænéas*, by contrast, received almost unanimous admiration. The popularity of the work's premiere at the 1935 World's Fair led to calls for a revival of the production in the 1935–36 season.²¹ Roussel himself wrote to Corneil de Thoran shortly after the premiere:

Je n'ai besoin de vous dire combien mon ami Weterings et moi souhaiterions que le théâtre de la Monnaie pût monter, l'automne prochain, ce ballet qui a reçu du public et de la critique un si chaleureux accueil et dont la chorégraphie est déjà entièrement réglée. Ainsi que vous avez pu vous en rendre compte, la partition n'offre des difficultés réelles ni pour l'orchestre ni pour les chœurs, et je sais que les chœurs de la Monnaie sont entraînés aux écritures modernes les plus audacieuses.²²

Roussel's ambitions for his work were reasonable, considering his reputation in Brussels. He was a darling of the Belgian press and concert organizers alike, both before and after the war.

Performances of his music were billed as part of the initiatives to present new music to Belgian audiences throughout the interwar years.²³ In 1922, for instance, the Concerts Populaires programmed the Belgian premiere of the French composer's *Festin d'Araignée* (as a symphonic suite). May de Rudder characterized the work, which had been composed in 1902, as “originale

not suited to staged productions. Joseph de Geynst, “Chronique musicale. Les soirées de Bruxelles. Trois ballets,” *La Meuse*, 7 May 1936.

²¹The performance, which took place at the PBA in conjunction with the 1935 World's Fair on 31 July 1935, also included the world premiere of Belgian Jef Van Durme's opera *Remous*, and Malipiero's *Pantea*. The concert was the culminating performance of Scherchen's third Session d'Enseignement, an annual summer course in conducting. The Monnaie lent sets to the PBA for the production. Kachourowsky also choreographed the ballet. This was the version that was revived for the 1936 performances.

²²Albert Roussel to Corneil de Thoran, 20 August 1935. Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique/ Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België (KBR), Documents varia, 7C 978/20/3.

²³Critic Arthur Hoérée celebrated Roussel's independence from the fashions of Les Six, and claimed that the composer took on “le rôle de père spirituel d'un mouvement d'avant-garde.” Roussel was Satie's counterpoint teacher at the Schola Cantorum, and the two maintained their friendship after Satie left the school in 1908. Roussel's family history, rooted in northern France, proved to be attractive to Belgians, as they could connect his music with characteristics of Flemish culture. Hoérée used a single gesture to connect Roussel to both Flemish (and therefore Belgian) tradition and to the modern ideal of the independent artist: “Le trait saillant, quand on considère la vie d'Albert Roussel, c'est son besoin d'indépendance. Ce désir de n'appartenir à aucun groupe, de ne dérouter le public aucune attitude d'homme de parti, confère à Roussel une place unique dans la musique contemporaine de France: ce grand indépendante reste un grand solitaire et cette attitude n'est pas étrangère à sa curieuse personnalité.” Arthur Hoérée, “A Propos du soixantenaire d'Albert Roussel,” *Cahiers de Belgique* 3, no. 3 (March 1930): 86–87.

et audacieuse” and “une musique suggestive au possible, délicate et fine, d’une clarté vibrante et vraiment ‘française’ et d’un travail aussi achevé qu’exquis.”²⁴ The last concert of the 1922–23 season at the Concerts Pro Arte was dedicated to the works of Milhaud and Roussel. The concert included his *Divertissement* for five wind instruments and piano, and his *Méodies*, sung by Jane Bathori.²⁵ In 1930, the Société Philharmonique even organized a “Festival Roussel,” a concert dedicated exclusively to the composer’s music.²⁶

Cuvelier and Scherchen decided to program *Aenéas* twice during the festival, on 6 and 8 May. They were convinced it would be a guaranteed success. The strategy to choose Roussel’s work as well as other repertoire that had been successful in Brussels during recent seasons backfired, however, as the festival’s programs were seen neither as innovative nor as exceptional as Baron Buffin de Chosal had advertised in February. The performances failed to attract large audiences. Regular concert-goers in Brussels had already heard much of the music and had even seen some of the productions that the festival was offering, foreigners could hear performances of these works elsewhere. Reviews of the performances outside of the Belgian press were rare.²⁷

²⁴May de Rudder “Musique,” *L’Eventail*, 7 April 1922. The ballet had been premiered at the Théâtre des Arts in Paris. May de Rudder, “Musique” *L’Eventail*, 14 May 1922.

²⁵“Musique,” *L’Eventail*, 18 March 1923.

²⁶The program, conducted by Lode de Vocht, with the Chorale Caecilia, included Roussel’s *Evocations*, written in 1911, and *Psaume LXXX*, dedicated to Queen Elisabeth, and completed in 1928.

²⁷In a review of the festival for *Le Ménestrel*, Lucien Solvay reported: “l’intérêt des programmes n’était pas assez fort pour mobiliser l’Europe, et le public belge, saturé de concerts, était trop peu nombreux pour remplir, à lui seul, pendant quinze jours presque consécutifs, la vaste salle du Palais des Beaux-Arts.” “Belgique,” *Le Ménestrel*, 15 May 1936.

“La grande misère des compositeurs belges”

The festival lost the support of leading Belgian composers and critics, including some who had subscribed as members of the festival.²⁸ Their main complaint was the near absence of Belgian music outside a single concert that corralled native composers in one circumscribed event.

Cuvelier attempted to preempt this criticism by emphasizing the participation of native artists in the festival. In his report on the Soirées, he highlighted the premieres of works by Belgian composers Marcel Poot, Jef Van Durme, and Francis de Bourguignon, and listed all the Belgian soloists and performing groups who participated.²⁹ Cuvelier’s report, however, proved to be too little, too late. Belgian composers had become disillusioned after hearing for months that the festival would be at once an international event and an opportunity to showcase Belgian music.

The Soirées de Bruxelles were an easy target for the campaign to defend Belgian composers, waged in the pages of the *Gazette musicale de Belgique et revue des tous les arts*. Its

²⁸A music critic for *La Dernière heure*, for example, criticized Berg’s *Le Vin (Der Wein)*, but praised Marguerite Thys’s performance on 30 April: “L’extrême raffinement d’écriture de cette musique quintessenciée la rend difficilement perceptible à une première audition pour quelqu’un de non préparé. Elle est cependant par moment très émouvante et le public lui a fait un réel succès, dont une grande part allait certainement à Mlle Marguerite Thys, dont les qualités vocales et la vaillance ont été fort admirés” (2 May 1936). Pierre l’Angle wrote of Marcelle Bunlet’s performance in *Erwartung*: “Malgré le talent autorisé de Mme Marcelle Bunlet [...], ce monodrame n’a guère emballé le public. Ce fut un succès de convenance, d’une froideur exceptionnelle” (“Les Soirées de Bruxelles: Séance de Ballets au Palais des Beaux-Arts,” *La Dernière heure*, 8 May 1936).

²⁹This tactic was familiar to the Société Philharmonique’s administration. In the report of the society’s activities for the 1934–35 year, a section on “La Société Philharmonique et les artistes belges,” outlined the ways in which the foundation fulfilled its “mission spéciale de favoriser tout spécialement en Belgique et à l’étranger la musique et les musiciens belges, soit en s’efforçant par l’émulation d’élever le niveau musicale de la capitale, soit par échanges artistiques à l’étranger, soit en organisant des tournées de groupements belges à l’étranger.” That season, the support for Belgian music included the performance of twelve works by Belgian composers, its backing of the Belgian writer Joseph Wetering’s collaboration with French composer Albert Roussel on *Enéas*, as well as a full program of Belgian conductors, chamber groups, chorales, and orchestras. An earlier draft of Cuvelier’s report on the Soirées, insists on the necessity of an international perspective on new music, going as far as to point to the festival’s concert of Belgian music on 28 April as one of the least successful performances because it did not appeal to the foreign audience: “Un festival de musique moderne doit être international. C’est ainsi que les gros[sic] succès du festival des Soirées de Bruxelles ont été dans la presse étrangère dans le public étranger, les exécutions musicales et théâtrales[sic] de Schoenberg, Markewitch et les opéras italiens à peu près inconnus.” Of the 28 April concert: “Le concert de musique belge [...] a démontré le manque d’intérêt du public et même des musiciens belges pour ce genre de manifestations. Cela a été de même pendant l’exposition de Bruxelles en 1935, où la majorité des programmes contenaient des œuvres belges.” “Bilan des ‘Soirées de Bruxelles’” (earlier version, undated), ASPH Box 13/66.

accusations of neglect and mercenary attitudes of the concert organizers in Belgium were led by the critic using the penname Régulus, whose crusade went back as far as 1933, when his article “La Grande misère des compositeurs belges” appeared in the journal. The article reiterated the complaints of E.L.T. Mesens, the Synthétistes, and Gaston Knosp, among many other Belgians, bemoaning the fate of Belgian composers in their own nation:

Il est profondément regrettable de constater l’indifférence avec laquelle on accueille un nom belge. Les artistes étrangers sont généralement bien reçus dans notre petit pays même (ne dirait-on pas: surtout?) quand leurs compositions ‘dernier bateau’ sont apparentées aux charivaris en honneur chez les nègres et dans les pays d’outre-Atlantique!³⁰

The problems Régulus outlined in 1933 became the battle cry for Susanne Daneau, composer, music critic, and director of the *Gazette musicale de Belgique*, who led an extended campaign against the Soirées, which many others joined.³¹

In February and March of 1936, Daneau wrote a series of letters to Cuvelier and to Adolphe Max, the mayor of Brussels and one of the festival’s patrons, first asking that one of her own compositions be included in the program, then requesting a discussion of the Belgian participation in the Soirées.³² The responses from the committee mirrored almost exactly the set

³⁰Régulus, “La Grande misère des compositeurs belges,” *Gazette musicale de Belgique et revue de tous les arts* 1, no. 5 (1 December 1933): 5.

³¹The *Gazette musicale de Belgique* took a strong nationalist stance on many issues, especially that of programming for the national radio company. In a series of articles in 1935 and 1936, the critic who wrote under the penname Régulus accused the INR of being an inbred organization that only programmed Belgian works written by the conductors of the radio orchestra, of being an “Institut National des Camarades,” and even after the INR sent a response to the *Gazette musicale de Belgique* saying that they would expand their programming to include more Belgian composers, Régulus complained that even this change could not save the radio service from their dull programs. Régulus, “L’I.N.R. ou l’Institut National des Camarades,” *Gazette musicale de Belgique et revue de tous les arts* 2, no. 49 (15 October 1935); “Qui confectionne les programmes ‘nationaux’ à l’I.N.R.,” *Gazette musicale de Belgique et revue de tous les arts* 2, no. 51 (15 November 1935); and “L’I.N.R. ou l’Institut National Repentant?” *Gazette musicale de Belgique et revue de tous les arts* 3, no. 1 (1 January 1936).

³²Her first letter, dated 29 February 1936, two months before the festival was to begin, asks the recipient to speak with Adolphe Max, mayor of Brussels, on her behalf. She wrote that she was hoping that her new ballet, *Réveil d’Endymion*, which had premiered at the Opéra Royal Flamand in Antwerp, would be accepted for performance at the Soirées de Bruxelles. A week and a half later, Daneau wrote directly to Cuvelier saying that she hoped to see her own work among those programmed for the festival. Cuvelier responded to Daneau the following day, explaining

of standard statements that Régulus described in a 1934 article about the absence of Belgian composers on the program for the Exposition Universelle of 1935.³³ The close parallel suggest perhaps that Daneau orchestrated the situation, looking to prove the point that Belgian composers as a group were abused, rather than to win a personal victory by having her works programmed.

When her private correspondence did not produce the results she wanted, she made her criticism of the festival public in the pages of the *Gazette musicale*.³⁴ The 15 April 1936 issue reported on a meeting between Max and a group of well-known Belgian composers, including Daneau. The mayor assured the composers that they could be sure to “croire que, dorénavant, il sera fait plus ample accueil à une musique belge de toutes les tendances dans nos manifestations artistiques,” but this meeting did nothing to change the programming choices for the Soirées.³⁵

A month after this meeting, the *Gazette musicale* printed a statement from a new group: the Ligue Nationale pour la Défense de la Musique Belge. The same composers who attended or

that the program for the festival had already been fixed, and that there were many Belgian participants scheduled, including stage directors, performers, soloists, and Belgian ensembles. He concludes: “Je suis persuadé que cette participation musicale belge vous fera plaisir.” Daneau, however, was anything but pleased by Cuvelier’s response. She wrote to Adolphe Max directly, asking for a meeting to discuss the Belgian representation at the “Soirées.” Max refused the meeting, offering instead a similar response to Cuvelier’s, listing the ways in which Belgian artists had been included in the festival (See ASPH, Box 13/66).

³³Régulus, “'Cuisine Musicale' ou l'organisation des concerts en Belgique. Plat du Jour...” *Gazette Musicale de Belgique et revue de tous les Arts* 1, no. 19 (15 July 1934): 2.

³⁴It is also possible, given the late date at which she wrote to Cuvelier about her music, that Daneau set up the situation in order to express justified anger at the abuses that Belgian composers suffered.

³⁵“A propos des ‘Soirées de Bruxelles’” *Gazette musicale de Belgique et revue de tous les arts* 3, no. 8 (15 April 1936). The article lists the following attendees at this meeting: René Barbier, Nicolas Daneau (Suzanne Daneau’s father), Suzanne Daneau, Auguste de Boeck, Albert Dupuis, Lucien Mawet, Martin Pierre Marsick, and Oscar Roels. The article also reports that Paul Gilson, Flor Alpaerts, and Fernand Mawet expressed their regrets for not being able to attend.

expressed support for the meeting with Adolphe Max signed this document.³⁶ The opening paragraph includes a thinly veiled commentary on the Soirées:

Des événements récents viennent de mettre en lumière, une fois de plus, la désinvolture injustifiée et inqualifiable avec laquelle nos musiciens sont traités dans leur pays; cette fois, les faits sont tellement flagrants que nous nous sommes décidés à prendre résolument l’offensive et à combattre, par tous les moyens en notre pouvoir, une façon de faire qui, si elle devait perdurer, détruirait, pour toujours, la possibilité de constituer à notre patrie un patrimoine musical national.³⁷

The problem of the reception of Belgian music, the Ligue asserted, was not that Belgium lacked composers of quality, but that the public opinion upon which the “dictatorships” of musical organizations based their programming decisions was

un public d’étrangers—qui donnent libre cours à leur tumultueux enthousiasme quand il s’agit d’œuvres de leurs compatriotes, tandis qu’ils marquent, ostensiblement, à l’égard des œuvres belges qui, par le plus grand des hasards, bénéficient d’une exécution, la plus dédaigneuse froideur.³⁸

Plans for Future Festivals

Cuvelier and his collaborators had begun to plan the 1937 and 1938 seasons even before the 1936 festival had taken place. Despite attacks from groups such as the Ligue Nationale pour la Défense de la Musique Belge and substantial financial losses in 1936, Cuvelier pursued these plans persistently until the end of the 1936–37 season.³⁹ A collection of documents dated April

³⁶Paul Gilson as président d’honneur, Marsick as president, De Boeck and Léon Jongen as vice-presidents, Suzanne Daneau as secretary-general and treasurer, and Alpaerts, Absil, Barbier, Du Chastain, Dupuis, and Gaston Knosp as members.

³⁷“Ligue nationale pour la défense de la musique belge,” *Gazette musicale de Belgique et revue de tous les arts* 3, no. 10 (15 May 1936).

³⁸Ibid. In June of 1936, the *Gazette* printed the statutes of the new society, which echoed this statement and detailed the organization of the society and the ways in which they planned to meet their goals for Belgian music. See “Les statuts de la Ligue Nationale pour la Défense de la Musique Belge,” *Gazette musicale de Belgique et revue de tous les arts* 3, no. 12 (15 June 1936).

³⁹The organizers depended on subscriptions to the festival and on individual ticket sales, but receipts fell short of their expectations. The Soirées suffered a net loss of 125,000 Belgian francs. This was an enormous deficit,

1936 chronicles the on-going preparation for the next season. Among the performers mentioned in these plans are Scherchen, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Erich Kleiber, the Ballets Russes, and even the surrealist artist René Magritte as a possible designer for ballet productions.⁴⁰ Table 7.3 shows the most detailed version of the plan for the 1937 festival. The plan for 1938 was even more ambitious.⁴¹ An undated list of possible performances for the third season included premieres of works by Schoenberg, Milhaud, Bartók, Honegger, Malipiero, Stravinsky, and Hindemith.⁴²

considering that the Société Philharmonique's budget for the regular 1935–36 season, including sixteen symphonic concerts, rehearsals, and chamber recitals, was just over 1,000,000 francs. Cuvelier claimed that the loss “n'est pas très considérable, étant donné le programme important et la somme considérable investie dans son organisation,” (Bilan des Soirées de Bruxelles (later version, undated), ASPH Box 13/66), but the weak attendance at the concerts was painfully apparent both to the festival organizers and to the critics. The critic *Le Soir*, for example, points out that the audience at the concert of Belgian music on 28 April was “malheureusement très restreint.” “Les Soirées de Bruxelles,” 1 May 1936. Valérie Montens lists the total receipts, expenses, and profits for each season of the Société Philharmonique between 1929 and 1939 in *Le Palais des Beaux-Arts*, 259.

⁴⁰“Soirées de Bruxelles 1937. Projet de Programme,” ASPH Box 16/Soirées de Bruxelles, Divers. A letter from Cuvelier to Scherchen in September of 1936 suggests that plans for the 1937 festival were still going forward: “lorsqu'il s'agit de travailler pour vous, soi[t] pour les “Soirées de Bruxelles, soit pour la Session d'Enseignement musical, vous pouvez toujours compter sur moi” (17 September 1936, ASPH, 20/31).

⁴¹Despite the cancellation of the 1937 festival, Scherchen continued to look for possible repertoire for the 1938 season. In May of 1937, he wrote to Cuvelier that he was looking forward to discussing plans for the Soirées 1938 (Postcard from Hermann Scherchen to Marcel Cuvelier, 16 May 1937. ASPH Box, 20/31). A month later, he wrote again to suggest Ernst Krenek's opera *Charles V*, which he had heard at the 1936 ISCM festival in Barcelona, and Albert Wolff's recently-completed edition of the Handel's *Agrippina*, which, he writes, “montera cette musique baroque pour la première fois dans un matière comme elle a été jouée au temps de Händel” (16 June 1937, APh Box 20/31).

⁴²“Soirées 1938,” ASPH, Box 16/Soirées de Bruxelles.

Table 7.3– Plan for Soirées de Bruxelles, 1937⁴³

Dimanche	Ouverture des “Soirées de Bruxelles” 15h.— Stade du Heysel- Grande Fête Militaire (au profit d’œuvres de charité avec le concours d’un journal): Musique militaire and Ballets équestres etc... 22h. – Grand Bal Rubens
Lundi	20.30h – Théâtre Royal des Galeries: Création d’une œuvre belge
Mardi	20.30h – Théâtre Royal Flamand: Création d’une pièce belge (H. Teirlinck?)
Mercredi	20.30h – Théâtre Royal du Parc: Création d’une pièce belge (A. Crommelynck)
Jedi	20.30h – Palais des Beaux-Arts— Théâtre Flamand d’Anvers: Création à Bruxelles d’une pièce étrangère
Vendredi	21h – Palais des Beaux-Arts—Cinéma “Le Visage du Monde”—Soirée de documentaires commentés (dessins animés)
Samedi	20h30 – Palais des Beaux-Arts avec le concours de l’I.N.R. Création du <i>Testament de Tante Sidonie</i> de Milo et A. Roussel. Opérette.
Dimanche	15h.—Heysel Grand concert de chant choral avec les Sociétés de Mineurs Exécution et création pour toutes les chorales d’une nouveau cœur de Marcel Poot
Lundi	20.30h—Palais des Beaux-Arts. Avec la collaboration de l’I.N.R. Création des <i>Euménides</i> de Claudel-Milhaud
Mardi	20.30h—Palais des Beaux-Arts—Société de Musique de Chambre Les Opéras de Chambre (créations) 1. <i>La Courtisane Amoureuse</i> (1568) de Roland de Lassus 2. Création d’une œuvre nouvelle de de Falla
Mercredi	20.30h—Palais des Beaux-Arts—Grande Salle Concert Symphonique de créations 1. Création de Huybrechts 2. Concerto de violon d’Alban Berg 3. Création de Gruenberg 4. Création de B. Bartók 5. Une œuvre de Chabrier
Jedi	20.30h—Palais des Beaux-Arts—Salle d’Exposition: Quatuor Pro Arte, 3 créations
Vendredi	21h.—Palais des Beaux-Arts—Salle M.: Concert Jeunesses 1937 (Prix Henry Le Bœuf)
Samedi	20.30h.—Palais des Beaux-Arts—Grande Salle Grand Gala de Ballets, Ballets russes de Monte Carlo 1. Ballet <i>Capriccios</i> de R. Gerhard Décor de costumes de Joan Miro 2. <i>Isabelle</i> , opéra de Florent Schmitt Décor et costumes de Jean Brusselmans 3. Ballet de T. Harsanyi Décor et costumes de Permeke
Dimanche	Clôture des “Soirées de Bruxelles” 22h.—Palais des Beaux-Arts. Hall de Sculptures Avec le concours du Corps de Ballet du Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. Grand Bal de Charité “Les visages de la danse”

⁴³This is a transcription of a type-written document in the ASPH, Box 16/Soirées de Bruxelles.

Neither the 1937 nor the 1938 plans came to fruition.⁴⁴ By January 1937, it was clear that Cuvelier would have to postpone the next festival. He was struggling to recover the losses that the Société Philharmonique had suffered from its contributions to the Soirées the year before. At the insistence of the board of directors, Cuvelier programmed a more traditional season to secure ticket sales and eliminated all the performances he had planned to supplement the regular subscription series.⁴⁵ In June 1937 Cuvelier decided to abandon the festival altogether. Among the factors that contributed to his decision were financial considerations, the protests from the Ligue Nationale pour la Défense de la Musique Belge, and the World's Fair in Paris, for which Cuvelier and other Belgians planned concerts of Belgian music.⁴⁶

Radio and the Changing Face of Musical Life in Belgium

Cuvelier wrote to Scherchen that the main reason he decided to discontinue the festival, however, was the competition he anticipated from the Institut National de Radiodiffusion (INR). Paul Collaer had recently been appointed the new director of Flemish music service for the INR.⁴⁷ Cuvelier suspected that Collaer had the intention “d’organiser lui-même un festival dans

⁴⁴The “Jeunesses 1937” competition took place independently, sponsored by the Société Philharmonique.

⁴⁵Marcel Cuvelier to Hermann Scherchen, 12 January 1937. ASPH Box 20/31.

⁴⁶In February of 1936, just as the programs for the Soirées de Bruxelles were being finalized, the project of planning the Belgian contribution to the Paris Exposition Universelle of 1937 was taking shape. In a letter from Cuvelier to Louis de Vocht, dated 19 February 1936, Cuvelier writes that he would like to discuss staging *Ænéas* for both the Soirées of 1937 and the Exposition in Paris (ASPh Box 18/6). The Exposition took place from 25 May through 25 November 1937.

⁴⁷Collaer was not the only candidate for the position. Gaston Verhuyck advanced himself as a candidate as well. Listing his bilingual interests, his work as manager of the Pro Arte Quartet, as administrator of the Groupe Pro Arte, his organization of the American tour by the Guides, and his hand in founding and managing the Orchestre Symphonique Populaire, Verhuyck concludes his letter: “Intéresser et divertir les auditeurs, propager le goût de l’œuvre artistique tout en préservant la plupart d’entre eux de l’ennui nécessite un attention continuelle à la composition des programmes et aussi à leur exécution. Le choix des artistes est une condition de succès. Mes connaissances en ce qui concerne les exécutants, leurs moyens et leurs spécialités, me mettent en mesure de rendre service.” Gaston Verhuyck to Monsieur le Président du Conseil de Gestion, 26 August 1935. ASPH, Box 11.

le genre des ‘Soirées de Bruxelles.’ Il est évident qu’avec les moyens que possède la Radio nous ne pouvons pas lutter. Il n’entre pas dans nos intentions de faire un festival ‘contre’ qui que ce soit et si d’autres veulent l’entreprendre à leurs risques.”⁴⁸ After several years struggling with his increasingly marginal position in Brussels’s musical life, Collaer took advantage of the public subsidies at the INR and the national and international visibility it gave him to reclaim his status as an arbiter of new music in Belgium.⁴⁹

In Belgium, as across the world, radio emerged as a new and influential medium in musical culture in the interwar years. Beginning in 1923, Radio-Belgique broadcast from Brussels, funded by private donations and money from advertisements. The station employed a small battery of musicians.⁵⁰ In 1930, the Institut belge de radiodiffusion (INR-NIR), a state-run radio organization with francophone and Flemish branches, was created. The new radio organization was the first in Brussels to offer musicians stable contracts, and Franz André, a graduate of the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles and student of Felix Weingartner, was appointed conductor in 1935.⁵¹

⁴⁸Marcel Cuvelier to Hermann Scherchen, 15 June 1937. ASPH, Box 20/3. Scherchen wrote to Cuvelier to ask him to reconsider his decision to cancel the Soirées, volunteering his own services and those of Weterings to help organize a smaller festival in Brussels. Cuvelier responded that he would consider Scherchen’s proposal, despite all of the trouble that the festival had caused him: “vous avez raison que c’est le côté international qui doit compter malgré les petites querelles de notre petite ville” (Cuvelier to Scherchen, 22 June 1937. ASPH Box 20/31).

⁴⁹For more on Collaer’s work at the radio, see *Correspondance avec des amis musiciens*, ed. Robert Wangermée (Sprimont: Pierre Mardaga, 1996). He also wrote several articles on music and the radio, including “La Culture Musicale par la Radiophonie,” *Die Musicke* 1, no. 2 (1937) and “Music in Belgian Broadcasting,” *Tempo* New Series, no. 23 (Spring 1952), 15–18.

⁵⁰Robert Wangermée, “La vie musicale à Bruxelles autour du Théâtre de la Monnaie,” in *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 33.

⁵¹Robert Wangermée, “La vie musicale à Bruxelles autour du Théâtre de la Monnaie,” in *La Monnaie entre-deux-guerres*, ed. Manuel Couvreur and Valérie Dufour (Brussels: Cahiers du GRAM, 2010), 33. The development of radio culture in Belgium is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Several Belgian scholars are exploring the history and significance of music broadcasting. See, for instance, Lieselotte Goessens, Katia Segers, Kristin Van den Buys, and Francis Maes, “National identity and/in Music: Study of the Contribution of the Music Policy of Early Flemish Radio Broadcasters to the Construction of a Flemish Cultural Identity, 1929–1939.” In *Proceedings of the IASPM Benelux conference. Popular Music: Theory and Practice in the Lowlands, April 14 and 15*, 186–200 (available at

Collaer organized performances of new music that would be broadcast throughout Belgium. In the summer and fall of 1936, this included a six-concert series, “Les Maîtres Contemporains de la Musique,” featuring the music of Ravel, Honegger, Milhaud, Prokofiev, Bartók, and Stravinsky.⁵² By 1938, the Institut National de Radiodiffusion had become the center for new music in Brussels, as conductors, musicians, and composers in Belgium turned to the possibilities that radio presented to fund and disseminate performances. As a result, many of the interwar concert societies, which had been instrumental in asserting the city’s musical identity in the 1920s and 1930s, had either been discontinued or had shifted their programming towards standard repertoire that attracted larger audiences. The outbreak of World War II was a new rupture in Belgian culture. The radio fell under the control of the German occupiers, and concerts were subject to strict censorship.⁵³

<http://www.iaspm.nl/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Proceedings-IASPM-Benelux-conference-April-2011.pdf>, accessed 15 August 2013); Kristen Van den Buys, *Het orkest: van radio-orkest tot Brussels Philharmonic* (Leuven: LannooCampus, 2013); and Olivia Wahnou de Oliveira, *Franz André (1893–1975), chef d’orchestre de la radio: correspondance et archives. Exposition organisé à la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique du 5 décembre 2003 au 24 janvier 2004* (Brussels: Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, 2003).

⁵²See Denijs Dille, *Les Maîtres Contemporains de la Musique: Ravel, Honegger, Milhaud, Prokofiev, Bartók, Stravinsky*, trans. Pierre Moulaert (Brussels: INR, 1936). For more on the INR before World War II, see Collaer, *Correspondance*; Pierre Stéphany, *Les années ‘20–’30: la Belgique entre les deux guerres* (Brussels: Paul Legrain, 1983); and Jos Vandenbreen and Robert Wangermée, *Studio 4: Maison de la radio, Flagey 1933–2002* (Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique-CIVA, 2004). The 1936 season at the INR also included a lecture series on Symbolism, with presentations by Collaer on symbolism and music, Paul Valéry on the development of symbolism, Grégoire le Roy on symbolism in Belgian literature, and Lugué-Poe on the Belgian author Charles Van Lergerghe. Collaer’s presentation on 15 June was part of a “Soirée du symbolisme” which live performances of works by Choussan, Fauré, Debussy, Milhaud, Stravinsky, and Ravel. See *Le Symbolisme 1886-1936* (Brussels: Brochure-Programme I.N.R., 1936).

⁵³For more on culture in Belgium during World War II, see Jules Gérard-Libois and José Gotovitch, *L’an 40. La Belgique occupée*. Brussels: CRISP, 1971, and the forthcoming special issue of the *Revue belge de musicologie Belgisch tijdschrift voor muzikwetenschap* on music in Belgium during the war.

Conclusions

The complexities inherent in defining or examining the musical identity of a city emerge in the interrelated stories of Henry Le Bœuf, Paul Collaer, Corneil de Thoran, Queen Elisabeth, and their institutions. The history of musical life in interwar Brussels emphasizes a collection of important issues related to musical identity of a city, how it is constructed, how it is maintained, and how it is broadcast to both locals and to outsiders. In Brussels many individuals and groups pushed competing agendas, contradictory interests, and constructed different visions of what music in the city should be. Their concerns were products of the specific local and historical context. The increasingly global worldview of the first half of the twentieth century and the more intense circulation of musicians and their aesthetic ideas through Europe informed musical life in Brussels

Among the concerns of cultural leaders in Brussels were such conceptual binaries as the Belgian capital's status as a cultural center or as a peripheral space to more dominant cities in France and Germany, the push and pull between past and present, and the distinction between private and public domains. When the leaders of music in Brussels confronted the day-to-day operation of organizations and musical activities, the binaries began to blur, especially where the complex relationship that Belgians had with national and cosmopolitan attitudes was concerned. For Le Bœuf, balancing nationalist interests that he perceived among his audiences with his enthusiasm for standard nineteenth-century repertoire and new works by foreign composers was key to the success of his musical organizations. Collaer, on the other hand, objected to nationalism for the sake of nationalism, and defended his choice to support music based on the merits he heard in it regardless of its origins. By aligning himself with French interests and music, Collaer looked beyond Belgium's borders. Many of the musicians who worked primarily

with him, including Darius Milhaud, continued to treat Brussels as a peripheral space to Paris—important, but not central to their careers. As a result, he isolated himself from the people who were key players in the social and cultural network that drove the city’s cultural life.

At the TRM, the interwar directors embraced the status of their opera house as one of the vital centers of European operatic culture as well as their audience’s taste for exoticism in new opera. At the same time, they adopted a more inward-looking attitude by emphasizing the links that their company had to the history of the creation of the Belgian nation. The Musée de la Monnaie, the revolving door of new productions of works featuring stories that focused on the importance of home by Belgian composers celebrated a specifically national institution, and the fascination with musical exoticism and primitivism marked the opera company’s efforts to make the genre relevant to Belgium and to post-war musical culture more generally. Elisabeth’s success balancing national interests with a cosmopolitan outlook allowed her to turn her attention to the cultural achievements of Belgian artists and to foreign artists whose presence in Brussels would enhance the nation’s reputation abroad. In fact, Elisabeth’s Fondation Reine Elisabeth perhaps illustrated most effectively the close relationship between nationalism and cosmopolitanism in the twentieth century. The two attitudes were not mutually exclusive, but rather worked together to create a dynamic cultural life. Elisabeth’s work was remarkable because it embraced this subtle association, rather than denying it and segregating national interests and cosmopolitan tastes.

A second issue, that of the push and pull between the past and present, emerged as the four leaders of Brussels’s musical life grappled with the ways that national and cosmopolitan interests intersected in their enterprises. For Le Bœuf, connections to the successful history of the prewar Concerts Populaires formed the foundation for his projects in the 1920s and 1930s.

Furthermore, he used audience favorites from the previous century to offset new works. These roots in past successes in Brussels offered him a stable basis for his exploration of newer works as part of his projects to centralize the musical culture of the city and to bring modern music to Belgian audiences. Collaer, likewise, took his cues from Octave Maus, *Les XX*, and *La Libre Esthétique* as he structured his *Concerts Populaires*. Perhaps more importantly, he also emphasized this connection as part of his series' lineage in later descriptions of his interwar achievements. At the TRM, the history of the company, particularly the memory of the 1830 performance of *La Muette de Portici*, and the legacy of Maurice Kufferath's direction were vital to an institution that focused on an outdated genre. Likewise, Elisabeth built upon the traditional role of royal patrons from previous centuries as she expanded her work and created her foundation.

Finally, the musical networks in the city relied on the blurring of the public and private domains in Brussels. Related to this was the conceptual division between the general audience and musical connoisseurs. The question of who was listening to art music and in what spaces is an important part of the cultural history of Brussels, from *Le Bœuf's* private gatherings to try out new music ahead of performances for a paying public, to the limited appeal of Collaer's *Concerts Pro Arte*, to objections over the queen's guest lists, to accusations leveled against the PBA as a "citadelle du snobisme." New music, especially, was presented as the domain of a select group of performers and critics. Such a representation raises questions about the ways Brussels's musical identity was shaped and projected, both abroad and to Belgians.

As a study of the contributions of four people and their musical projects within a dense network of people in Brussels, my dissertation and its central themes suggests many avenues for further research and analysis. Although *Le Bœuf*, Collaer, de Thoran, and Elisabeth dominated

the interwar musical scene, many others contributed to the construction of the city's musical identity. Mayor Adolphe Max's enthusiasm for cultural projects has been largely overshadowed by his reputation as a war hero and his political campaigns to rebuild the city's economy in the 1920s and 1930s. His support, however, proved to be vital not only to Le Bœuf, but to other musical institutions of the time. His patterns of patronage and his strategies to wield his political power in support of music, therefore, would be a worthwhile avenue of inquiry. Conductor Charles Houdret, who created his own concert series, and later directed the queen's musical foundation, has been vilified as a self-interested character. Not only did he refuse to suspend performances during the 1923 musicians' strike, but he also embezzled money from the Fondation Musical Reine Elisabeth during World War I. As a result, his contributions to Brussels's interwar musical identity have been largely overlooked. Other contributors who have yet to be studied in detail include conductor Desiré Defauw and concert manager Fernand Lauwreyns, both of whom worked closely with the major institutions in Brussels while still organizing their own concerts. Though this project focused primarily on the performance of standard nineteenth-century repertoire and of new music, the early music scene in Brussels also proved to be important to the local civic musical identity. The study of music of the Franco-Flemish Renaissance masters and the revival of their music proved to be a point of national pride. Charles Van den Borren especially wrote extensively on the "Belgian" influence on European music of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, and participated in early music performing groups' work to expose audiences to that repertoire. Each of these possible avenues of research would involve a reevaluation of the boundaries between center and periphery, past and present, and public and private.

The themes that emerged in this discussion and the ways they play out in the biographies of Le Bœuf, Collaer, de Thoran, and Elisabeth offer a way to consider constructions of musical identities in other urban centers and at other historical moments. As the products of shared concerns within a network of people in a defined space, this kind of study can offer a perspective on the ways musicians, composers, patrons, critics, and concertgoers worked together to construct an understanding of their city's identity and its place in a wider network of musical centers.

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