

BEING FAITHFUL TO THE COLLABORATIVE PAST

MARGUERITE LONG AND HER "TRADITIONS" OF
THREE FRENCH COMPOSERS

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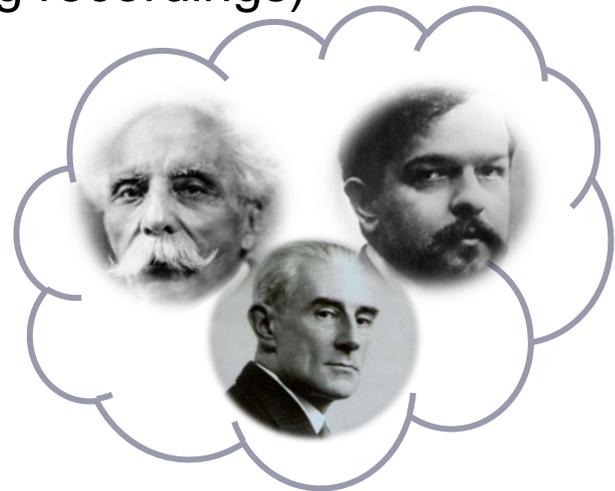
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INTRODUCTION

- **In the early 20th century...**
 - Fully established “division of labor” : composer / performer
 - Performers’ internalization of the “Stravinskian” ethics:
composer > “executant” (≠ “interpreter”)
 - **Modern performers...**
 - As faithful servants of “great composers”
 - As creative, spontaneous artists
- **How to reconcile the two conflicting(?) identities?**

INTRODUCTION

- **Subject of Research**
 - Marguerite Long's narratives on so-called performing traditions of the composers with whom she had interacted
- **Method and Sources**
 - Discourse analysis of Long's different writings and talks (books, archive materials including recordings)



CONTENTS

- 1. Marguerite Long and her “Three Great Masters”**
- 2. Looking Back on the Collaborative Past**
- 3. Obedience and Liberty**
- 4. Being Faithful, to Whom?**

PART 1: BACKGROUND

MARGUERITE
LONG AND HER
"THREE GREAT
MASTERS"

MARGUERITE LONG

(1874 - 1966)

- **French pianist-pedagogue**
 - Professor at the Paris Conservatoire (1906-1940)**
- **Co-founder of the Concours Long-Thibaud (1943)**
- **Champion of the Modern French piano music**



THE "THREE GREAT MASTERS"

- **Long's post-war self-definition:**
 - "An interpreter chosen by Fauré, Debussy, and Ravel"
 - "A guardian of traditions" of the "Three Great ones"

"To Marguerite Long"



FAME AS A "NATIONAL" ARTIST

«Marguerite de France»

MORT DE LA GRANDE PIANISTE MARGUERITE LONG

Elle était âgée de 91 ans



LA GRANDE DAME DE LA MUSIQUE FRANÇAISE

La musique française
en deuil avec la mort
de Marguerite **LONG**

*La grande dame
du piano français*

La grande pianiste fut l'interprète
de Fauré, Debussy
et Ravel.

et les « Barcarolles », les « Et des » de Roger Ducasse et celle de Debussy avec qui elle travailla plusieurs mois. Son mari tué à la guerre au grade de capitaine, elle put

LONG'S MEMOIRS ON THE THREE COMPOSERS

- *At the piano with Claude Debussy* (1960)
- *At the piano with Gabriel Fauré* (1963)
- *At the piano with Maurice Ravel* (1971, posth.)

(All published by René Julliard, Paris)

“DUBIOUS” TESTIMONIES?

- **In Long’s three memoirs...**

- The facts are overstated
- Her rapport with each composer are exaggerated

→ **“In doing so, Long discredits herself rather than reflecting the real stature of her career” (Dunoyer 1993)**

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- **To present an alternative reading of Long's narrative as a trace of ...**
 - “Power politics” in the music-making process
 - Hidden conflicts over creativity between the composer and the performer

PART 2: ANALYSIS

LOOKING BACK
ON THE
COLLABORATIVE
PAST

CASE STUDY

- **Comparison of her narrative on different composers, focusing on her experiences "at the piano with... "**
 - Fauré (ca.1903-1912)
 - Debussy (1914, 1917)

SOURCES

- **Long's publications (memoirs, articles, methods...)**
- **Archive materials:**
 - Long's manuscripts and typescripts for speeches, master classes, publications etc. ("Fonds Marguerite Long" in Médiathèque Musicale Mahler, Paris)
 - Long's interviews and talks on the radio/ TV programs (Inathèque, Paris)



Toute la TV
Radio
Web média

GENERAL FINDINGS

1. Two types of “ tradition ” - narrative based on...

- Composer’s request (=composer-led): Ex. Debussy
- Composer’s approval (= **performer-led**): Ex. **Fauré**

2. Long’s position during the sessions reflects her evaluation of the composer *as a pianist*

- Debussy: “an incomparable pianist” ← professor vs pupil
- Fauré: “not a virtuoso, nor an executant”
← **composer vs interpreter**

3. Level of conviction in the use of the term “Tradition”:

- **Fauré** > Debussy

PART 3: DISCUSSION

OBEDIENCE
AND
LIBERTY

SENSE OF RESTRICTION OF LIBERTIES

“The acknowledged right of an interpreter to express himself in a composition at the same time implies acquiescence with the wishes of the composer, a willingness to observe all the indications marked in the text. In respect of these latter, composers today vary considerably (Debussy and Ravel are imperiously exacting, while Fauré is just as vague) but there is a movement towards precise observation of details of notation and to restriction of liberties on the part of the performer.”

(Marguerite Long, “Composers and interpreters,” *At the Piano with Maurice Ravel*, trans. by O. Senior-Ellis, London: Dent, p. 16)

FACING THE “STRAVINSKIAN” DEMAND

- “*I do not ask for my music to be interpreted, but only for it to be played*’ (Maurice Ravel) ” (*ibid*, p. 16)
- “...**Stravinsky** demanded of the interpreter--whom he deeply distrusted--that he should remain apart from a work and limit himself to the exercise of a craft [*métiers*]. **But this is to turn music from its noblest aspirations and to deny its most specific virtues.**” (*ibid*, p. 23)

OBEDIENCE TO GAIN LIBERTY

“One must maintain what the composer has written as untouchable and sacred. Here the matter of the interpreter's subservience or freedom begins to break down, so why should one put these two terms in opposition, since they mark successive and necessary stages? **It is first of all in obedience that one prepares oneself to gain liberty.**” (*ibid*, p. 23)

PART 4: EXEMPLIFICATION

BEING
FAITHFUL,
TO WHOM?

CRITICISM OF PERFORMER-LED TRADITION



There is
NO
Fauré's
Tradition!

Philippe Fauré-Fremiet
(Second son of Gabriel Fauré)
1950

TRADITION OR DISTORTION?

- Ex. Fauré: *Impromptu No. 2*, F minor (1883), mm. 65-70
 - “Absurd” tradition of acceleration (Fauré-Fremiet 1957)
 - Typical example= Long’s recording (1933) 



dim sans presser *p*

“Without
hurrying”

“Fauré gave full approval
for me to remove it”
(Long 1963)

COMPOSER'S RESISTANCE?

- Major revisions by Fauré in the 2nd edition (1926)

	Tempo	m.16	m.65	m. 186	m. 257	m. 265
Autograph* (May 1883)	Allegro allo molto	leggieramente	dimin. e leggiero	dimin. e leggiero	---	leggierissimo
1 st edition (1883)	Allegro molto.	leggiero	dim. e leggiero	dim. e leggiero	sempre pp	leggierissimo
2 nd edition (1926)	Allegro (=69)	---	dim. sans presser	dim. sans presser	sans presser sempre p	---

*Departement de la Musique, Bibliothèque nationale de France, VM BOB- 6325

- General restriction of faster tempo
→ Fauré's **disapproval** of the contemporary performance practice (including Long's)?

(cf. Nectoux 1990/2008)

FIDELITY TO THE (PREVIOUS) SCORE...

- **Long possessed only the 1st edition (1883) (*Fonds Marguerite Long*, Médiathèque Musicale Mahler)**
- **“Tradition” of accelerations (mm.65-, 186-, 257-) :**
 - Based on the indications of “leggiero” on the 1st edition (obedience?)
 - Realized through Long’s “creative” idea in performance (liberty?)

...AND TO HERSELF

- **Long's faithfulness to *her* "tradition" of Fauré**
 - Unchanged interpretation despite the later revision (1926) of the score (cf. Long's recordings 1933,1957)
 - Emphasis on the composer's "approval" for her own interpretation (cf. Long 1963)
- **Contradiction : "approval" for "removal" of "sans presser"?**
 - Indications that didn't exist yet at the time of her collaboration with Fauré (1902-1912)

CONCLUSION

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- **What Marguerite Long transmitted as “traditions”:**
 - The idea of “fidelity to the score” established through her own experience with contemporary composers
 - Her way of interpretation of the works of her “collaborators”
- **Long as a “Modern” performer/pedagogue**
 - A guise of “faithful servant” through a narrative to defend her own creativity



THANK YOU !

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