

Discussing (Neo)Classicism in the Parisian Musical Press, 1919-1940: Quantifications, Conceptions, and Historiography

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The time is ripe for what might be called neo-classicism, in music as in literature. Our individual preferences and tastes have nothing to do with it: the clock of history is always ticking and, for those who want to read it, it clearly points to 'neoclassicism'. We are all steeped in it to varying degrees, and even those who protest cannot escape the grip of the present¹.

It's the big news of the day, the catchword in vogue. In the most authoritative circles, the 'objective' music of a Stravinsky or a Ravel is all anyone talks about. Insiders may know what the expression means; the snobbish masses repeat it without understanding².

¹. Shorter, preliminary versions of this article have been presented at the international conference *Editing, Performing and Re-Composing the Musical Past: French Neoclassicism (1870–)* (Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, 5-7 September 2018) and at the seminars *Musique et (néo-)classicismes en France (1850-1950)* (Université de Montréal and McGill University, Winter 2019), *Igor Stravinsky in France* (University of Ottawa, Winter 2021), and *(Néo)classicismes et artisanat: Ravel, Stravinski et leurs contemporains* (University of Fribourg, Autumn 2023). My analysis benefited greatly from the discussions with the organizers and graduate students attending the seminars. Special thanks to Stacey Brown, who translated the numerous quotations and revised the English of the article. Note on citations: the musical press articles which constitute the main corpus of the present study are listed in APPENDIX and referred to in the main text and footnotes as 'Author Year-Month'. All other citations are listed in the BIBLIOGRAPHY and referred to as 'Author Year'.

¹. «L'heure présente est à ce qu'on pourrait appeler le néo-classicisme, aussi bien en musique qu'en littérature. Nos sympathies personnelles, nos goûts n'ont rien à y voir: l'horloge de l'histoire est inexorable, et elle marque clairement pour celui qui veut lire: 'néo-classicisme'. Nous en sommes d'ailleurs tous plus ou moins imbus, et ceux-là même qui protestent ne peuvent échapper à l'emprise de l'heure présente». SCHLOEZER 1923-07, p. 251.

². «C'est la grande nouveauté du jour, c'est le mot à la mode. On ne parle plus, dans les milieux les plus autorisés, avec un petit sourire entendu, que de la musique 'objective' d'un Stravinski ou d'un Ravel. Les initiés savent peut-être ce que signifie l'expression; la foule des snobs la répète sans comprendre». LANDORMY 1925-05, p. 273.

INTRODUCTION: STRAVINSKY *L'ÉLU*
AND OTHER HISTORIOGRAPHICAL TROPES

A 2017 article by Marianne Wheeldon in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, issued from a chapter of her latest outstanding monograph on Debussy's legacy, attracted new attention on the archaeology of the concept of French 1920s neoclassicism, its (partial) origins in a Debussy *vs* Stravinsky quarrel (which Wheeldon puts at the core of her study), and the birth of the Schoenberg *vs* Stravinsky opposition³. Yet the complexity of this recurring research topic — the essence, definition, and trajectory of the concept of French neoclassicism — deserves further investigation in order to complement the existing, valuable narratives. As Hermann Danuser stated, «it would [...] be vain to elaborate a single concept of neoclassicism» and «it is preferable not to pretend to construct a generalized ideal type but rather to adopt an open form of presentation that allows a description of the individual traits of neoclassicism»⁴. That is because *one* neoclassicism never existed, neither geographically nor within the same country. Yet, in the latter respect, Wheeldon's narrative could appear to be misleading, inasmuch as she presents an almost linear evolution of the concept in France: «in denouncing Debussyism, Cocteau and Les Six articulated a new stance of anti-Debussyism, which in turn augured the beginnings of neoclassicism, *synonymous with Stravinsky*»; then, «neoclassicism was reconfigured as a reaction to Schoenberg and his aesthetic language of neo-romanticism and expressionism»⁵. One thus feels that Wheeldon's declared aim of relativizing the centrality usually accorded to Stravinsky in the treatment of neoclassicism is only partially accomplished⁶. According to this narrative, neoclassicism indeed appears as a composer-centred

³. WHEELDON 2017A; 2017B, chap. 'Debussyism, Anti-Debussyism, Neoclassicism', pp. 65-97. On pre-war and post-war anti-Debussyism see also: the introduction to PERLOFF 1991, 'Symphonies without "Sauce": The Reaction against Impressionism', pp. 1-18; HAINE 2014; KIEFFER 2019. The history of the Schoenberg/Stravinsky opposition was reconstructed by TROTTIER 2008.

⁴. DANUSER 2004, p. 261.

⁵. WHEELDON 2017B, pp. 66 and 95, emphasis added. Wheeldon nevertheless tempers these statements shortly afterwards, recognizing that 'radically opposed narratives were constructed around these terms' (*ibidem*). See also WHEELDON 2017A, pp. 434-436.

⁶. «Much of the literature on neoclassicism focuses either solely on Stravinsky or on the Stravinsky-Schoenberg polemic that emerged in the mid-1920s. [...] Recognizing the role of anti-Debussyism in the emergence of neoclassicism is necessary» (WHEELDON 2017A, p. 434). Scott Messing's crucial book from 1988 on the concept of neoclassicism builds up a narrative where the composer has been put in the foreground («[in the 1920s] the term neoclassicism and Stravinsky

concept, a «relational term» whose «negative counterparts» were Debussy and, later, Schoenberg⁷. Hence neoclassicism is described as an anti-Debussyist stance formulated by some critics (Jacques Rivière, Jean Cocteau, and others) and composers (Les Six), and embodied in Stravinsky's music especially: «In engaging the ubiquitous anti-Debussyism of post-war Paris, Stravinsky allied himself with the latest musical avant-garde»⁸. This is certainly one of the trajectories of the concept, and the obvious one to be emphasized in a book about Debussy's legacy.

Scott Messing's tremendous, thorough study of the trajectories followed by the concepts of new classicism and neoclassicism from the end of the nineteenth century to 1927 puts Stravinsky at its core in a somewhat different but equally definitive way. Messing first traces the different aesthetic agendas and cultural perceptions of the two expressions 'new classicism' and 'neoclassicism' before the Great War (more on this distinction below), and analyses the ways in which composers such as Debussy and Ravel approached certain pre-Romantic musical forms⁹. Noting that pre-war terminology loses its connotations in the 1920s — 'new classicism' and 'neoclassicism' becoming interchangeable phrases — Messing changes his perspective: instead of continuing to follow the trajectories of these words, he focuses on the discourse on Stravinsky. His aim is to determine how concepts used to describe Stravinsky's music (such as simplicity, youthfulness, and objectivity) crystallize from 1923 onward under the catchword 'neoclassicism', which becomes a practical «unified aesthetic fabric»¹⁰. It is a compelling and revealing study of how the use of the term 'neoclassicism' served the circulation of an aesthetic (Stravinsky's).

were united»), with two chapters out of the four dealing with neoclassicism and France dedicated to the composer (MESSING 1996, p. 129).

⁷. WHEELDON 2017A, p. 436. I will not develop on the Stravinsky/Schoenberg opposition, expressed by Jean Cocteau as early as 1915 (COCTEAU 1915) and sometimes present in French musical press between 1922 and 1925 (see in the corpus considered for the present article LIZOTTE 1922-11, CŒUROY 1923-03, ANSERMET 1923-11, SCHLOEZER 1923-12, ANSERMET 1925-03, p. 19). It will just be mentioned that other positions can also be found and that the two composers are far from being considered the embodiment of two opposite tendencies. Some critics even claimed that Schoenberg was a model to Stravinsky — his «path to Damascus» according to KOEHLIN 1922-02, p. 47; for Arthur Hoérée, Stravinsky «was able to revolutionize music with his *Rite* thanks in part to the precursor Schoenberg» (HOÉRÉE 1928-02, p. 315).

⁸. WHEELDON 2017A, p. 461.

⁹. MESSING 1996, chap. 1.

¹⁰. *Ibidem*, pp. 89-112, 129 (quotation), 133-139, 151. According to Messing, the first to use 'neoclassicism' (*néoclassicisme*) in connection to Stravinsky (and specifically to his *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*) was Boris de Schloezer (SCHLOEZER 1923, p. 247).

This article proposes a complementary approach focused on the study of the effective presence of a discourse on (neo)classicism¹¹ in the French musical press of the interwar period. Instead of isolating the term to see how it was appropriated as a catchword, the following pages will illustrate the many ways in which it was used or omitted, in connection with Stravinsky or not. French music critics debated the phenomenon labelled as neoclassicism — with all its variants (*'nouveau classicisme'*, *'classicisme nouveau'*) and sister concepts (*'retour à...'*) — in a plural way, often without any references to Debussy, Stravinsky or other aesthetic agendas.

While the place accorded to Stravinsky in connection to these terms will be discussed specifically, other issues will always run in the background without being directly addressed. One of them is the political dimension that some scholars have regarded as central to the discourse around French (neo)classicism. Richard Taruskin's oft-quoted claims about the fascist nature of Stravinsky's 'back to'¹² or Jane Fulcher's classifications of cultural agendas and musical poetics on a left-right-wing ideological axis¹³ are two main examples of such a politics-focused analysis. According to Fulcher, «neoclassicism in wartime and the twenties [seen as a continuity by the author] was no *Zeitgeist*, it was the 'national style', synonymous with patriotism», and composers «faced a choice between concepts and values that were freighted with ideological meaning», namely between the nationalistic classicism of *L'Action française* and a leftist universalist classicism¹⁴.

Taruskin also stresses another point: the ironic essence of Stravinsky's neoclassicism («an ironic mixture of styles»¹⁵). Without questioning Stravinsky's intentions, it is worth asking if his choices were perceived as ironic by the critics and composers of his day, and to what extent irony was evoked to describe, imitate, or combat Stravinsky's neoclassical music. In fact, this element is almost absent

¹¹. The combined form (neo)classicism adopted in this article follows TARUSKIN 1993.

¹². *Ibidem*. See also TARUSKIN 2003: «In the decade of the 1920s [Stravinsky] became arbiter supreme of that authoritarian and reactionary stance we now call Neoclassicism». This kind of politics-centred narrative penetrated Italian and French popularization of neoclassicism via Raffaele Pozzi's chapter for the encyclopedia edited by Jean-Jacques Nattiez (POZZI 2001/2003).

¹³. See FULCHER 1999A (reprinted in CARROLL 2012, pp. 179-212; developed in FULCHER 2005). A substantial criticism of Fulcher's political determinism of the aesthetical realm was expressed by many reviewers of her previous book (FULCHER 1999B), see for instance HUEBNER 2001 and CABALLERO 2002.

¹⁴. FULCHER 1999A, pp. 198, 212, and *passim*.

¹⁵. TARUSKIN 2010, p. 482. See also his reading of Stravinsky's 'Some Ideas about My *Octuor*' (1924) as a «mock-forbidding manifesto» (*ibidem*, pp. 488-490).

in our corpus¹⁶. We could then ask *how* these discourses interacted and *if* all discourses on (neo)classicism by musicographers of the period (critics, composers, musicologists) were actually as much composer-, politics- or irony-focused as it may appear when reading these scholars' narratives. Thus, the present article suggests another possible lens through which to view the debate on (neo)classicism in interwar France while trying to measure the true extent to which 'neoclassicism' was discussed by French music critics of the interwar period¹⁷. This approach is not meant to be revisionist, aimed at denying the narratives by other scholars, but offers a complementary perspective enriching and nuancing them. My reading of the musical press confirms, for instance, that a large part of the reflection on (neo)classicism revolves around Stravinsky. Though, as the following pages will show, this was not necessarily the case.

This article is composed of two parts. The first, 'Quantification', situates the presence of a discourse on (neo)classicism within the French musical press and evaluates the place occupied by Stravinsky in our corpus. The second part, 'Conceptions', analyses how 'classicism' was intended, defined, and discussed by interwar French musicographers, and then examines the way they assessed the neoclassical trends of the period. In complementing Messing's and Wheeldon's study of the «transformations that [concepts as anti-Debussyism or neoclassicism] underwent in the hands of many», the following reconstruction of the discourse in the musical press deepens our knowledge of «what any single individual ascribed to [such epithets]»¹⁸. That is something that Wheeldon discarded but that provides a fuller idea of the number of avenues that were open to be pursued in the 1920s. Consequently, this variety of coexisting conceptions puts into perspective the one chosen by the group of composers studied by specialists of Debussy and Stravinsky. Finally, in taking a step back from the detailed analysis of sources, the 'Discussion and Conclusion' highlights the key issues at the heart of the debate.

¹⁶. Irony was far from being at the core of the reflection on Stravinsky's new manner. Some allusion can be found elsewhere in the critical reception of Stravinsky, for example when André Suarès affirms that the composer «is mocking the world» (SUARÈS 1929, p. 55).

¹⁷. CAMPBELL 2003 affirms that «'neoclassicism' was a *central term* in musicography of the interwar period» and that «while its use did not originate in descriptions of Stravinsky's works, it became *indissolubly associated* with them» (p. 237, emphasis added). Other scholars tacitly imply such a pervasive discourse on neoclassicism in the press, see for instance PIQUER 2012. It is certainly true that issues linked to neoclassicism were a current topic and that Stravinsky deserved an important place in the debate. However, the corpus of press articles assembled for the present study invites more caution in the use of such affirmative phrases.

¹⁸. WHEELDON 2017B, p. 66.

French musicographers' discussions were less a matter of definitions and lineage, and more about a shared reflection on the future of music and how to once again achieve an ideal classicism as is found in the past.

PART I. QUANTIFICATION

I.1. BETWEEN CLOSE AND DISTANT READING

Wide-ranging queries around a concept or a set of concepts help modify the established knowledge about how historical and aesthetic labels emerge and settle in the discourse about music. The present article contributes to this endeavour. It aims at mapping the discourse on (neo)classicism within the French musical press in the 1920s and 1930s through the scrutiny of a large selection of texts of all kinds (articles, reviews, and inquiries) which appeared in the seven most important musical journals published in Paris in the interwar period: *Le Courrier musical*, *Le Guide du concert*, *Le Ménestrel*, *Le Monde musical*, *Musique*, *La Revue musicale*, *Revue Pleyel*. This expands on what has previously been done in two ways. First, by avoiding the focus on specific composers (especially Debussy or Stravinsky¹⁹) and second, by considering that the debate continues after 1925, 1927 or 1928 (respectively Maureen A. Carr's, both Messing's and Wheeldon's, and Thomas Patrick Gordon's *termini ante quos*)²⁰. No research in the press can expect to be exhaustive. The choice of narrowing the research to within the musical press thus excluding the daily and cultural press, in which previous scholars have identified several crucial texts, provides a rather homogeneous and representative corpus. Of course, a full scrutiny of the non-musical press could only be desirable and would contribute to honing and enriching even more the cartography of the debate about (neo)classicism presented hereafter. Occasional reference to some of the articles from these sources will complete the selected corpus.

One of the advantages of focusing on the musical press is that it allows for the merging of close and distant reading. The latter consists in scanning a large mass of data through software that makes it possible to explore a corpus without reading it²¹. Although results obtained in this way may be particularly suitable

¹⁹. A selective list of studies of 1920s neoclassicism acknowledging the centrality of Stravinsky for the definition of the concept could include (in chronological order): GORDON 1983; VINAY 1987 (in particular chap. 1, 'Ricognizione del neoclassicismo musicale'); VINAY 1997; VAN DEN TOORN 1997; HYDE 2003; CARR 2014.

²⁰. A study of the Parisian press debate on Stravinsky's style during the 1930s can be found in VINAY 2000.

²¹. On distant reading applied to French music criticism, see JOUBERT 2022.

for a lexicographical inquiry, an aesthetic study of the appearance, discussion, and use of the concepts related to (neo)classicism needs a homogeneous corpus whose dimensions allow for a close reading of each article²². The 140 articles selected for this study enable both in-depth scrutiny and some telling quantitative observations. For instance, keyword queries in the database of musical press articles used for this research provide a comparative ratio of the presence of discourse about (neo)classicism in relation to other topics like new media (record and radio: about 200 articles) or nationalism (about 500 articles)²³. Moreover, within our corpus, the specific words ‘*néo-classicisme*’ / ‘*néo-classique*’ (always with a hyphen) or ‘*nouveau classicisme*’ / ‘*classicisme nouveau*’ / ‘*nouveau style classique*’ occur in less than one out of three articles. On one hand, this means that these concepts are only part of a larger discourse around classicism, music objectivity, and a return to the past. On the other hand, it confirms what Messing has already pointed out, that phenomena such as objective music or the return to Bach were only occasionally categorized as (neo)classical by contemporary observers²⁴. These and other possible quantifications offer a telling hint that (neo)classicism was far from being a concept used and discussed everywhere within the French musical press of the interwar period, and that an inquiry beyond the specific use of the term in its different versions is necessary to better understand it.

1.2. STRAVINSKY AND THE DISCOURSE ON (NEO)CLASSICISM

As pointed out at the beginning of this article, today’s narratives put Stravinsky at the core of French neoclassicism. According to recent literature,

²². Lexicographical studies of musical ‘neoclassicism,’ interested in recollecting the different forms of the terms in a derivative (hence multilanguage) perspective, can be found in BANDUR 1994, MESSING 1996, QUARANTA 2003.

²³. My research is based on the database of press articles of the project *Histoire de l’esthétique musicale en France, 1900-1950* hosted in the website <<http://pressemusicale.oicrm.org/>>. On the methods, aims, and outcomes of the project, led by Michel Duchesneau at the Université de Montréal, see the special *dossier* ‘Esthétique musicale en France, 1900-1950’ in DUCHESNEAU 2017. It is important to stress that the corpus for the present study is not meant to be exhaustive, and the issues analysed here may be found, albeit in a less developed form, in other texts published in the musical press.

²⁴. For example, with reference to the critical reception of Stravinsky’s Octet in October 1923, MESSING 1996 remarks that «Whereas *classique* and *le nouveau classicisme* appeared often in reviews of the work, the term *néoclassicisme* was absent. [...] It was only one of many code words circulating in French intellectual circles that sought to define post-war avant-garde tendencies. By 1923, *néoclassicisme* was one of a half dozen slogans — including *nouveau classicisme*, *classique*, *objectivisme*, *réalisme* and *style dépouillé* — that were characterized by the same familiar terminology» (p. 131).

talk of neoclassicism in the 1920s was mostly driven by Stravinsky's works, and all neoclassical music was considered Stravinskian²⁵. But focusing only on the (real and crucial) links between Stravinsky and neoclassicism overshadows much of the discourse where Stravinsky is absent.

What is the proportion between (a) articles discussing neoclassicism focused on Stravinsky and (b) articles discussing neoclassicism where Stravinsky is absent or just mentioned among other composers? In other words, what are Stravinsky's *effective presence* and *relative weight* in the discourse on (neo)classicism in the French musical press between the two world wars?

Discussions on (neo)classicism are found in texts dedicated to many other composers, often of foreign origin (from Alexandre Tansman to Sergei Prokofiev, from Arthur Lourié to Willem Pyper or Paul Hindemith)²⁶. TABLE 1 lists articles on specific composers in which discussion of (neo)classicism is integrated. Articles on Stravinsky are included in order to situate him quantitatively and chronologically in relation to others.

TABLE 1: ARTICLES ABOUT SPECIFIC COMPOSERS

Subject of the Article	Author, Date, Nature of the Article (F, R, S, I), Level of Development of the Reflection on (Neo)classicism (**, **, *)	Stravinsky's Presence (++, +, -, /)
Auric	SCHLOEZER 1926-01A, F**	+
Bloch	SCHLOEZER 1926-07, R**	-
Bordes	DUKAS 1924-08, F*	/
Casella	CASELLA 1928-11, I** CORTESE 1934-06, F*	/
Debussy	CŒUROY 1921-05, F* LIESS 1931-01, F** KOECHLIN 1934-01, F**	/
Emmanuel	BÉCLARD D'HARCOURT 1935-01, F*	/
Ferroud	DUMESNIL 1931-11, F*	-
Gedalgé	KOECHLIN 1926-03, F*	/
Glinka	LOURIÉ 1925-10, F*	+
Guy-Ropartz	GOLDBECK 1938-09, R**	-
Hindemith	LIESS 1933-07/08, F**	+
Kodály	TOTH 1929-10, F*	/

²⁵. It must be noted that less recent French musicology almost linked neoclassicism to Les Six (see especially FAURE 1997). This could explain why irony is still considered as an essential feature of this trend.

²⁶. See SCHLOEZER 1923-07, TESSIER 1928-01, GOLDBECK 1933-07, GOLDBECK 1935-04, and LIESS 1933-07 respectively.

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Lourié	GOLDBECK 1933-07, R*	/
Magnard	LAFORÊT 1920-11, F*	/
Markévitch	SOUVTCHINSKY 1932-08, F*	+
Milhaud	SCHLOEZER 1925-03, F*	+
Prokofiev	TESSIER 1928-01, R**	/
Pyper	GOLDBECK 1935-04, R**	/
Ravel	ROLAND-MANUEL 1921-04, F*	-
	SUARÈS 1925-04, F**	/
	ROLAND-MANUEL 1925-04, F**	+
	BRUSSEL 1938-12, F**	/
Roland-Manuel	CHEVAILLIER/ROLAND-MANUEL 1929-05, I*	/
Roussel	HOÉRÉE 1928-07, R**	/
	ROLAND-MANUEL 1929-05, F**	-
	HOÉRÉE 1930-01, R**	/
	HOÉRÉE 1935-01, R**	/
Satie	SCHLOEZER 1924-08, F*	/
	ROLAND-MANUEL 1924-12, F**	-
Schmitt	FERROUD 1924-04, F*	/
Schoenberg	KOECHLIN 1922-02, S**	-
	KOECHLIN 1922-03, S*	/
	HOÉRÉE 1928-02, F***	-
	STEIN 1931-03, F*	/
Stravinsky	ANSERMET 1921-07, F*** BOULANGER 1923-11, R** SCHLOEZER 1923-12, F*** ROLAND-MANUEL 1924-06, F** ROLAND-MANUEL 1924-07, R** SCHLOEZER 1924-07, R*** ANSERMET 1925-03, F*** LOURIÉ 1925-08, S*** SCHLOEZER 1925-11*** LOURIÉ 1927-06, S*** LOURIÉ 1927-12, S*** SCHLOEZER 1927-06, S** ROLAND-MANUEL 1928-12, S** SCHLOEZER 1929-02, F*** LANDORMY 1929-07, F** HOÉRÉE 1929-12, F** SCHLOEZER 1930-02, F*** LOURIÉ 1930-04, S*** PRUNIÈRES 1931-04, R** LANDORMY 1935-05, R* HONEGGER 1939-06, I* HOÉRÉE 1939-05, F**	(main topic of all articles)
Tansman	SCHLOEZER 1923-07, R**	-
Tomasi	CLASSENS 1936-09/10, F**	+

F = feature article • R = concert or book review • S = study of a single work • I = interview or other direct intervention by a composer (i. e. response to a survey) • *** = highly developed • ** = some important ideas • * = marginal
+ = main character of a part of the article • - = named in passing • / = absent

It is not surprising that the articles on older composers such as Charles Bordes, Maurice Emmanuel, André Gedalge or Albéric Magnard never mention Stravinsky, as the nature of their (neo)classicism is not the same as that of the «classical modernism» or «modernist classicism» (to use Danuser’s preferred expressions)²⁷ in vogue especially from the 1920s onwards. Nevertheless, these articles were published during the interwar period, and it is therefore not irrelevant to note that it was possible to hold other forms of discourse on (neo)classicism than that on current compositional trends — and that these trends were not necessarily the basis for comparing all forms of (neo)classicism past and present. We will come back to this conceptual richness in the second part of the article.

Stravinsky could in some cases be given a major role in articles on other composers, as a point of reference for describing the style of those composers²⁸. TABLE 2 completes TABLE 1 by quantifying Stravinsky’s presence within the discourse on (neo)classicism in articles that are not devoted to the study of a specific composer. Articles are grouped according to the extent of the reflection around (neo)classicism²⁹ and then listed in chronological order.

TABLE 2: STRAVINSKY’S PRESENCE IN ARTICLES NOT DEVOTED TO THE STUDY OF A SPECIFIC COMPOSER

Extent of the Reflection on (Neo)classicism	Author, Date, Nature of the Article (F, R, S, I)	Article’s Topic	Stravinsky’s Presence
Highly developed	LANDORMY 1921-02, F	Decline of Impressionism	–
	LIZOTTE 1922-11, F	Current trends in music	+
	GILLET 1923-09, F	Classical <i>vs</i> Romantic music	/
	ANSERMET 1923-11, R	ISCM Festival	+
	SCHLOEZER 1924-03, F	Music and literature	+
	KOECHLIN 1924-10, F	Construction and sensibility	+
	LANDORMY 1925-05, F	Objectivity in music	/
	SCHLOEZER 1925-06, F	Classicism and coldness (<i>sécheresse</i>)	+

²⁷. DANUSER 2004, p. 281.

²⁸. For example, LIESS 1933-07/08 (on Hindemith) and CLASSENS 1936-09/10 (on Henri Tomasi).

²⁹. This evaluation is based on the place occupied by the reflection on (neo)classicism in each article and on the importance of the argument compared to the other articles in the corpus. Although expressed in quantitative terms, it is therefore largely based on qualitative criteria derived from the analysis of the corpus. It should be taken as an indicative value for the purpose of organizing the presentation of the corpus.

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	MONNET 1926-02, F	Neo-Thomistic objectivity in music	+
	KOECHLIN 1926-11, F	Back to Bach	– (footnote)
	STRAVINSKY 1927-12, I	« Néo-classicisme »	/
	ROLAND-MANUEL 1928-07, R	A glimpse of the season	+
	TANSMAN 1928-11, I	His vision of contemporary music	–
	KOECHLIN 1929-02, F	Sensibility and modern music	–
	DEMARQUEZ 1930-03, F	Remarks on <i>néo-classicisme</i>	+
	PÂQUE 1931-04, F	Classicism	/
	FEBVRE-LONGERAY 1931-04, F	Back to...	/
	LOURIÉ 1932-12, F	Back to Bach	+
	PRUNIÈRES 1936-01, F	Current trends in music	+
Some important ideas	KOECHLIN 1921-03, F	Intellectual <i>vs</i> sensual music	/
	KOECHLIN 1921-08, F	Musical fashion and modern life	–
	LANDORMY 1921-11, F	Intellectualism <i>vs</i> Sensibility	–
	KOECHLIN 1922-04, F	Quarrel between the old and the new	/
	BUSONI 1923-01, F	Against <i>néo-expressionnisme</i>	–
	HURÉ 1923-03, F	Current trends in music	/
	CŒUROY 1923-03, F (partial)	Schoenberg <i>vs</i> Stravinsky	+
	BERTRAND 1924-06, R	Ballets Russes	+
	ODIER 1924-07, F	Periodicity of musical trends	–
	BLOCH 1924-09, F	Insurrection against sensitivity	+
	AUBERT 1926-03, R-F	Reflections on concerts	/
	ROLAND-MANUEL 1926-04, F	Pure music	+
	BARTÓK 1926-06, S	His view on modern music	+
	ROUSSEL 1926-06, S	His view on modern music	/
	PRUNIÈRES 1926-08, R	ISCM Festival	–
	ANSERMET 1926-12, F	Russian music	+
SCHLOEZER 1927-02, F	Back to Bach	–	
ROLAND-MANUEL 1927-07, F	Back to Bach	+	
SCHLOEZER 1927-09, R	Objectivity of the musical work	/	
LAURENT 1927-11, F	Modern art	–	
PETIT 1928-06, F	Present aesthetic discourse	–	
[HONEGGER 1928-03], S	Young composers	–	
HURÉ 1928-09, F	Classicism	/	
HURÉ 1928-10, S	His vision of contemporary music	/	
MACHABEY 1929-01, F	Modern harmony	/	
GUIBERT 1930-01, F	Musical parallels between eras	–	
BENDER/CASELLA 1931-02, I	Nationalist classicism	/	
CASELLA 1931-02, (I/F)	Italian contemporary music	–	

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	PRUVOST 1931-02, F	Search for the new	/
	GOLDBECK 1931-03, (I/R)	Classicism and Italianism	/
	PRUNIÈRES 1931-08, F	Trends in young French school	+
	DAUGE 1931-09, F	The evolution of music	/
	CARTAN 1933-05, I	His vision of contemporary music	+
	PÂQUE 1933-08, F	Pure music	/
	GOLDBECK 1938-05, F	Current trends in music	+
Marginal	MIGOT 1919-08, F	Topicality of preclassical music	/
	JAQUES-DALCROZE 1920-10, F	Rhythm	/
	MANGEOT 1921-09, F	Learning music backwards	/
	JARDILLIER 1923-07, F	Musical evocation of the 18th century	/
	SCHAEFFNER 1925-01, R	Concerts Wiener	-
	SCHLOEZER 1926-01B, F	Music and eroticism	-
	BOULANGER 1926-06, F	Portraits of contemporary composers	+
	ROLAND-MANUEL 1926-06, S	His vision of contemporary music	+
	POLLAZZI 1926-08, F	Innovation and a return to the past	/
	KOECHLIN 1927-03, F	Back to Bach	/
	KOECHLIN 1927-04, F	Back to Beethoven	/
	SCHAEFFNER 1927-06, F	Wanda Landowska's "Back to Bach"	-
	PRUNIÈRES 1927-09, R	ISCM Festival	/
	FORNEROD 1928-10, S	His vision of contemporary music	/
	HOÉRÉE 1928-11, S	His vision of contemporary music	-
	SUARÈS 1931-05, F	Symmetry	/
	KOECHLIN 1935-04, F	French music since Debussy	-
	PRUNIÈRES 1936-02, F	Current trends in music	-
	ESTÈVE 1937-04, F	Rhythm and classicism	/
	VINTEUIL 1937-05, R	Triton (Martinů)	/
	HIRSCH 1937-10, R	Concerts Poulet and Siohan	/
	HIRSCH 1938-02, R	Concerts Pasdeloup (A. Tchérepnine)	/
	VINTEUIL 1938-03, R	Société philharmonique de Paris (Malipiero)	/
	R. F. 1938-03, R	Tryptique (Honegger)	/
	DANIEL-LESUR 1938-11, F	Form and content in music	/

F = feature article • R = concert review • S = response to a survey • I = interview or other direct intervention by a composer • + = main character of a part of the article • - = named in passing • / = absent

All articles combined (TABLES 1 and 2), and excluding the 22 articles specifically devoted to Stravinsky, there are 29 articles where Stravinsky is the main topic of a part of the article, 31 articles where he is named, but not central to the reflection, and 58 articles where his name is absent. All this to say that a discourse on (neo)classicism detached from Stravinsky not only existed, but was prevalent in the French music journals of the interwar period (64% of our corpus).

Some cases of Stravinsky's absence are worth mentioning. Koechlin's influential article on the *retour à Bach* from 1926 only names Stravinsky in a footnote³⁰. Another extensive article on the trend towards 'returns' does not mention Stravinsky either.³¹ Ironically, the composer himself makes no self-reference in his 'Warning' originally published by *The Dominant* and published in French translation in *Musique*, a one-page text focusing specifically on critical discourse about the «return to classicism» and «neo-classicism»³².

Stravinsky's role as a leader of the neoclassical movement is variously assessed. In 1924, Jean-Richard Bloch offered an affirmative response, writing that «universal consent has already agreed on the man who symbolizes [the unavoidable reaction against sensibility]: Stravinsky»³³. But the composer's role has also been put into perspective: «this return to a kind of neo-classicism of which Mr. Stravinsky does not have a monopoly manifests itself [...] in all countries and in all arts», wrote Paul Bertrand the same year as Bloch³⁴.

Stravinsky's role has been significantly diminished in retrospect. The director of *La Revue musicale*, Henry Prunières, writing in 1936 on the current tendencies of music claimed that «[i]f Stravinsky's intervention in favour of the 'return to Bach' proved decisive [in the 1920s], it cannot be ignored that it would have taken place even without him»³⁵. Even when Stravinsky's role as a leader was accepted,

³⁰. KOEHLIN 1926-11, p. 6, fn. 2. This is perhaps, albeit surprisingly, the reason why Messing — who elaborated a history of the concept of neoclassicism at that time by focusing on Stravinsky — did not mention it. Stravinsky's name is absent from two other articles that Koechlin devotes respectively to the return to Bach and the return to Beethoven (seen as a facet of the first return), KOEHLIN 1927-03 and KOEHLIN 1927-04.

³¹. FEBVRE-LONGERAY 1931-04.

³². STRAVINSKY 1927-01.

³³. «Une réaction [contre le siècle de la sensibilité] était inévitable. [...] Le consentement universel s'est déjà mis d'accord sur l'homme qui la symbolise: Stravinsky» (BLOCH 1924-09, p. 303). See also ROLAND-MANUEL 1926-04, LIESS 1933-07, p. 103, or CLASSENS 1936-09/10, p. 246.

³⁴. «[...] ce retour à une sorte de néo-classicisme dont M. Stravinsky n'a pas le monopole se manifeste [...] dans tous les pays et dans tous les arts». BERTRAND 1924-06, pp. 288-289.

³⁵. «Si l'intervention de Stravinsky en faveur du 'retour à Bach' fut décisive, on ne saurait méconnaître que, même sans lui, elle se serait opérée». PRUNIÈRES 1936-02, p. 81.

it was not always judged positively. Prunières accused him of the faulty tendency towards pastiche, which was fuelled by snobbery and dragged several young people into a dead end. Stravinsky's «disciples» were blinded by the «new religion» of the constructivist return to classical forms³⁶ — from which, Prunières hoped, they would emerge once they had passed the age of «children's games»³⁷.

The quoted examples discussed the importance of Stravinsky's connection to neoclassicism. But one might wonder if the composer, when he appeared in the discourse on (neo)classicism, was always associated with this trend. Things were more nuanced. In his review and response to Schloezer's book on the composer and especially to the chapters pre-published in *La Revue musicale*, which largely dealt with the methodological (and not chronological) distinction between classical and romantic spirit,³⁸ Paul Landormy contested that Stravinsky's approach was a classical one and perceived it instead as romantic (I will discuss this issue further below):

If in truly classical music the melody must become the theme of various combinations, of a whole sonic architecture, I no longer see how Stravinsky can be considered properly classical. [...] [Schloezer] helped us see [...] that Stravinsky does not 'develop' in the strictest sense, but juxtaposes continually different musical ideas [...]. I suppose so. But I mention this to point out that this is not classical procedure at all, that this way of doing things does not proceed from constructive reason in the slightest, that it stems from pure sentiment.

And so, if we can adhere to the traditional contrast between classicism and romanticism as two methods, one based on reason, the other on feeling, then Stravinsky, in his use of melody, will not seem to be a classicist, but a pure romantic, taking freedom of invention further than the most independent romantics³⁹.

³⁶. PRUNIÈRES 1936-01, p. 37.

³⁷. PRUNIÈRES 1931-08, pp. 100-101.

³⁸. SCHLOEZER 1929-02. This article reproduces chapters 3 ('Le problème du style') and 4 ('Un art classique') of SCHLOEZER 1929/2012.

³⁹. «Si dans une musique vraiment classique la mélodie doit devenir le thème de combinaisons diverses, de toute une architecture sonore, je ne vois plus comment Stravinsky peut être dit proprement classique. [...] [Schloezer] nous a fait observer [...] que Stravinsky ne 'développe' pas à proprement parler, qu'il juxtapose des idées musicales toujours différentes [...]. Je veux bien. Mais j'en prends acte pour faire remarquer que ce n'est pas là du tout le procédé classique, que cette façon de faire ne procède en rien de la raison constructive, qu'elle émane du pur sentiment. Et alors, si nous avons le droit de nous en tenir à l'opposition traditionnelle du classicisme et du romantisme comme de deux méthodes dont l'une est appuyée sur la raison et l'autre sur le sentiment, Stravinsky

Since the early 1910s, the French press had sought to define Stravinsky's music in contrast to Debussy and Romanticism⁴⁰. The works commented on at the time were obviously nothing (neo)classical (from *The Firebird* to *The Rite of Spring*): Stravinsky had invariably been received as anti-impressionist, whether this anti-impressionism gave rise to works such as *The Rite* or the Octet. The neoclassical attitude was thus only one of the paths beyond Debussyism explored by Stravinsky. And one might even wonder to what extent French musicographers have insisted on a reading of Stravinsky's neoclassicism as opposite to Debussy's impressionism. Surprisingly, in our corpus of articles discussing (neo)classicism, the opposition between the two composers is never made so explicit. In the articles that deal with the question of (neo)classicism, Debussy's name, rather than being opposed to Stravinsky, is put in dialectical relation either with Satie⁴¹, Ravel⁴² or music of 'youth' in general⁴³. It is rather a more general 'impressionism' that is sometimes opposed to the Stravinskian approach. According to Schloezer, starting from *Petrouchka*, Stravinsky carried out a «search for a new musical art — dynamic and objective [...] with classical tendencies»⁴⁴ in opposition to romanticism (defined as «dynamic subjectivism»⁴⁵ or «subjective dynamism»⁴⁶) and impressionism (characterized as «contemplative and passive subjectivism»⁴⁷ or, more interestingly, «static objectivism»⁴⁸).

nous apparaîtra dans l'usage qu'il fait de la mélodie, non point comme un classique, mais comme un pur romantique, allant plus loin dans la liberté de l'invention que les plus indépendants des romantiques». LANDORMY 1929-07, p. 1003. SCHLOEZER 1930-02 would reply to Landormy and other reviewers of his book.

⁴⁰. The most well-known articles are those by Jacques Rivière that appeared in the *Nouvelle Revue française*, then collected in *Études* (Paris, NRF, 1911) and *Nouvelles Études* (Paris, Gallimard, 1947). See BANCROFT 1972 and DUFOUR 2006, chap. 6. The first feature article on Stravinsky published in a music journal, by Émile Vuillermoz, compares the Russian composer's «so to speak mechanical motricity» with trends within his music which can be identified as romantic, impressionist and expressionist (VUILLERMOZ 1912, p. 19).

⁴¹. ROLAND-MANUEL 1924-12; Stravinsky is mentioned only in passing.

⁴². SUARÈS 1925-04; Stravinsky is not mentioned.

⁴³. ROLAND-MANUEL 1926-06. As WHEELDON 2017B noticed, «in the passage from Debussyism to anti-Debussyism, the composer is obviously central to the aesthetic debate; in the transition from anti-Debussyism to neoclassicism, he becomes increasingly peripheral» (p. 66).

⁴⁴. «[...] recherche d'un nouvel art musical — dynamique et objectif [...] à tendances classiques». SCHLOEZER 1923-12, pp. 112-113.

⁴⁵. «subjectivisme dynamique». SCHLOEZER 1923-12, p. 122.

⁴⁶. «dynamisme subjectif». SCHLOEZER 1926-01A, p. 10.

⁴⁷. «subjectivisme contemplatif et passif». SCHLOEZER 1923-12, p. 122.

⁴⁸. «objectivisme statique». SCHLOEZER 1926-01A, p. 10. As he explains in SCHLOEZER 1923-12, p. 122: «[...] impressionist naturalism [...] gave the illusion of directly achieving

In the early 1930s, Debussy's name was sometimes associated with (and not contrasted with) (neo)classicism. This is not surprising, since during the 1920s the composer had undergone a canonization process. Debussy was then generally considered a French classic (though a «revolutionary classic» in Koechlin's words)⁴⁹, in the sense of a reference composer whose music successfully drew on eighteenth-century French masters. This was a position that Debussy himself tried to promote during the last years of his life, but that was not immediately accepted by critics⁵⁰. Jean Cartan then questioned a certain reading of music from the 1920s in terms of anti-debussyism and saw two sides of the same coin instead: «It was believed that the harshness of some of today's music was at odds with the seductiveness of Debussy. But that is only a very superficial appearance. [...] Seeking to incite pleasure or pain, are these not two rather similar extremes of the same feeling?»⁵¹ Andreas Liess even situated the impressionism/neoclassicism opposition within Debussy's career, thus locating in the composer's own creative evolution the very origin of what was to be perceived as anti-debussyism. He spoke of a «neo-classical period» in Debussy's late style, the main work of which he identified as *Le Martyre de Saint-Sébastien*⁵². The *objectivité nouvelle* (new objectivity) that followed Debussy's death (note: Stravinsky's name does not appear anywhere in the article) thus fulfilled the composer's work, which according to Liess served as a «transition» from romanticism to neoclassicism. A transition that Debussy himself would have made in the end if he had not died prematurely⁵³.

an objective reality, but only got this illusion by sacrificing the movement» («[le] naturisme impressionniste [...] donnait l'illusion d'atteindre directement une réalité objective, mais il n'obtenait cette illusion qu'en sacrifiant le mouvement»).

⁴⁹. «[His] music [is] natural and classical: in the tradition of the great *revolutionary classics* Guillaume de Machaut, Josquin, Monteverdi, Purcell, Bach, — and Gabriel Fauré. This is why his work, in the final analysis, proved to be extensive and fruitful. And the marvellous garden to which he led us was not a dead end» («[S]a musique [est] naturelle et classique: de la lignée de ces grands *classiques révolutionnaires* que furent Guillaume de Machaut, Josquin, Monteverdi, Purcell, Bach, — et Gabriel Fauré. C'est pourquoi son action, en définitive, se révéla étendue et féconde. Et le merveilleux jardin où il nous mena, ce n'était point une impasse». KOECHLIN 1935-04, 268, original emphasis.

⁵⁰. See WHEELDON 2011.

⁵¹. «On a cru que la rudesse de certaines musiques d'aujourd'hui s'opposait à la séduction debussyste. Mais ce n'est là que très superficielle apparence. [...] Chercher à plaire ou à faire souffrir, n'est-ce pas les deux pôles, bien proches, d'un même sentiment?». CARTAN 1933-05, p. 341.

⁵². LIESS 1931-01, p. 45.

⁵³. *Ibidem*, p. 54.

A similar position had been expressed by André Cœuroy in a more technical way ten years earlier⁵⁴. He contrasted the synthetic spirit of romantic, impressionist, polytonal, and atonal harmony with an analytical conception specific to classicism. Here, Debussyism was contrasted with classicism, but the polytonal tendencies of the beginning of the 1920s were considered an evolution of Debussyism, not a contrapuntal reaction to the verticality most often blamed on impressionism⁵⁵:

Classicism analyses: the group *do-ré* rends it as a dissonance; it picks the notes apart by referring them both to one and the same tonality, and excludes one to the detriment of the other. Romanticism, followed by impressionism (and then by polytonality and atonality), considers this same group as a compound and, properly, a consonance, that is to say, an amalgam of two absolute tones⁵⁶.

PART II. CONCEPTIONS

Different meanings of a single concept and its definition in relation to other sentences coexist within the corpus and also within the texts of a single author. It would be futile to seek definitions or to link related concepts in a mainstream, common way. The French musical press of the interwar period provides a whirlwind of coexisting positions from which a fixed notion of (neo)classicism could hardly emerge. When reading the press, it is important to ask (a) which term is used (*what*); (b) whether the phenomenon is simply observed or whether it is described or even explained or criticized (*how*); (c) whether the term is connected to any composer specifically (*who*). Rather than trying to simplify the issue, the aim of the

⁵⁴. CŒUROY 1921-05.

⁵⁵. In the *Revue musicale*, where Cœuroy was the editor in chief at the time, the most influential critics tended to be in favour of Debussy. Charles Koechlin on two occasions denounced the relentlessness against Debussy (KOECHLIN 1927-04; 1934-01). See also KELLY 2012, HERLIN 2015, and WHEELDON 2017B, chap. 'Reputational Entrepreneurs', pp. 29-64.

⁵⁶. «Le classicisme analyse: le groupe *do-ré* le déchire par une dissonance; il en sépare chaque note et les rapportant toutes deux à la même tonalité, en exclut l'une au détriment de l'autre. Le romantisme, puis l'impressionnisme (et par-delà le polytonal, et l'atonal) considèrent le même groupe comme un mélange et, proprement, comme une consonance, c'est-à-dire un amalgame de deux sons absolus». CŒUROY 1921-05, p. 121; English translation in CŒUROY 1929, p. 254. Cœuroy's theory runs counter to those who read polytonality and, in general, the combination of traditionally non-consonant notes as a legacy of the encounters between passing and main notes in Bach's music; see DAUGE 1931-09, p. 378.

present article is to present the debate in all its variants, contradictions, and now-forgotten nuances.

Many scholars have sought to sort out the different meanings behind the use of similar expressions. In an inspiring keynote lecture, Steven Huebner proposed a continuum of phrases that could be used nowadays to distinguish between five possible attitudes invariably referred to as (neo)classical:

- 1) *pastiche* (obliteration of the composer's voice);
- 2) *historicism* (retrospective intent);
- 3) *living classicism* (employment of historical forms within a living tradition);
- 4) *neoclassicism* (defamiliarized juxtaposition)⁵⁷;
- 5) *evocation/homage*⁵⁸.

Gianfranco Vinay also defined five ways of being neoclassical:

- 1) *evocation* of a pre-romantic, mythically pure musical era;
- 2) *ironic deformation* of the tradition;
- 3) *modernized restauration*, of a musical work of the past;
- 4) *parody* (in the ancient meaning of replica);
- 5) *pastiche* in the form of collage into a suite of musical excerpts from the past⁵⁹.

Martha Hyde, focusing on Stravinsky's style from *Pulcinella* to *The Rake's Progress*, defined four compositional attitudes:

- 1) *eclectic imitation* (compilation of *objets trouvés* from the musical past re-used in a modern way);
- 2) *reverential imitation* (an ornamented transcription of a hypotext);
- 3) *heuristic imitation* (declared accentuation — instead of dissimulation — of the link with the past in order to accentuate the difference and show the aged character of the model);
- 4) *dialectical imitation* (an explicit dialogue/competition between the work and its model)⁶⁰.

TABLE 3 provides a conceptual grid that merges these complementary models, with the addition of the categories of 'objectivism' and 'imposture', taken directly from the discourse of the interwar period, both stressing the distance between the creator — working their material just as a detached artisan — and the artistic product. The result is a model that illustrates a continuum ranging

⁵⁷. As pointed out by Keith Chapin, *distance* is the key ingredient of the aesthetic category of neoclassicism: «[...] *neoclassicism* implies self-consciously respectful, nostalgic, or ironic distance with respect to classicism itself». CHAPIN 2014, p. 145.

⁵⁸. HUEBNER 2018.

⁵⁹. VINAY 1987, p. 21.

⁶⁰. HYDE 2003.

from the composer's insertion into a historical but living tradition to the desire to completely conceal the author's personality behind an assemblage of found objects from the past and present.

TABLE 3: MODERN CATEGORIES OF NEOCLASSICISM

<p>1) <i>Living classicism</i> (employment of historical forms within a living tradition) ex. Ravel, String Quartet, 1903</p> <p>2) <i>Pastiche, Modernized restauration</i> or <i>Reverential imitation</i> (a personalized transcription of a hypotext, more or less pronounced erasure of the composer's voice) ex. Stravinsky, <i>Pulcinella</i> (1920)</p> <p>3) <i>Neoclassicism</i> (appropriation, neo- vs. Romantic inspiration) compilation of <i>objets trouvés</i> from the musical past re-used in a modern way (<i>eclectic imitation</i>)</p> <p>a) <i>Historicism</i> and <i>evocation/homage</i> (retrospective intention, sometimes exotic, often nationalistic, could take the form of a parody/replica) ex. Ravel, <i>Le tombeau de Couperin</i> (1917) language modernization on a declared/recognizable model (<i>heuristic imitation, dialectical imitation</i>) serious nature (tribute, choice for expressive purposes)</p> <p>b) <i>Objectivism</i> (synthetical, constructivist attitude based on borrowing, distancing, disconcerting juxtaposition, fusion of ancient and modern elements): ex. Stravinsky, Octet (1923) construction (mechanism, 'watchmaking' vs. impressionism/expressionism) irony (distance, filter vs. sincerity, 'imposture') (<i>heuristic imitation, dialectical imitation</i>)</p>
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Category 1, 'Living Classicism', is borrowed from Huebner. It is useful for understanding works that may have been called 'classical' or 'neoclassical' by critics because of their use of forms or genres that predate the nineteenth century but have never fallen out of use — for instance, Ravel's String Quartet.

Category 2 merges three concepts used by Huebner, Vinay and Hyde ('Pastiche', 'Modernized Restauration', and 'Reverential Imitation' respectively) to class such works as Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* in which the modern composer modifies one or more hypotexts from the past⁶¹. The level of deviation from the original work(s) can vary considerably.

Following Huebner, the actual term 'Neoclassicism' is reserved for those works that share an attitude of appropriation of various materials on the part of the composer. These materials are generally recognizable as coming from the past, but in a defamiliarized way. This is the compositional approach Hyde calls 'Eclectic Imitation'. It can be broken down into two trends:

a) works that have a retrospective intent, that evoke or pay homage to a style or period through the modernization of a declared or recognizable model

⁶¹. See PRÉVOT 2017 for a meticulous classification of the relationships between *Pulcinella* and its hypotexts.

(Huebner's 'Historicism' and 'Evocation/Homage') — for instance, Ravel's *Tombeau de Couperin*;

b) works based on the artisanal assembly of heterogeneous elements, sometimes ironically — for instance, Stravinsky's Octet. Depending on the degree of 'competition' with the model, these two sub-categories of work can fall into either the attitude Hyde calls 'Heuristic' or that she calls 'Dialectical Imitation'.

This kind of relatively simple classification may be useful in talking about the phenomenon of neoclassicism in a less ambiguous way. In the following analysis, I will occasionally refer to the categories in TABLE 3 to clarify certain terms found in the press. However, the interchangeable use of the same expression (i.e., new classicism) in the press of the time suggests, on the one hand, that composers and critics perceived this continuum in a very unitary way and, on the other hand, that each reader had a certain margin of interpretative freedom according to their own conception of the term used. One telling example comes from a 1931 Ravel interview, where the composer associated Stravinsky's 'neo-classicism' ('Objectivism' according to TABLE 3) with his own String Quartet from 1903 (which rather belongs to 'Living Classicism' in our model), interestingly justifying this by a common anti-Debussyist attitude in the name of counterpoint: «Stravinsky is often considered the leader of neoclassicism, but don't forget that my String Quartet was already conceived in terms of four-part counterpoint, whereas Debussy's Quartet is purely harmonic in conception»⁶². For the sake of a music historiography that both draws from the actual terminology of the interwar period (the «culturally informed music historiography» encouraged by Taruskin twenty-five years ago in a contribution that focussed — significantly — on approaching the concept of (neo)classicism through the study of the press)⁶³ and transcends it retrospectively, the current section will present the different ways musicographers in the 1920s referred to the continuum of compositional choices presented in TABLE 3.

⁶². Ravel quoted in *DE TELEGRAAF* 1931/1990, p. 473. On the evolution of Ravel's discourse on his relationship with Debussy through the promotional narrative proposed by Roland-Manuel see KELLY 2011.

⁶³. TARUSKIN 1993, p. 288. Taruskin advocated the study of the «public discourse» (which surrounds and determines the history of works) and not only of the «professional discourse» (produced *a posteriori*). The public discourse includes the press, while the status of composers' writings remains unclear in this dichotomy (some appear to be part of the public discourse and others of the professional discourse). Taruskin himself seems to face this aporia at the end of his article when, quoting a statement by Stravinsky, he wonders whether it is a question of «catchphrase journalism» or «professional discourse» (p. 302). See in this regard the Schloezer-Koechlin dispute cited by DUCHESNEAU 2018, p. 21.

When Prunières asserted in 1936 that Albert Roussel, Maurice Ravel, and Florent Schmitt had been the first to give the example of a «renewed classicism» (*classicisme renouvelé*), he gave no clear definition of it⁶⁴. Nevertheless, Prunières claims these composers' primacy over others, notably Stravinsky, which implies that from his point of view their approach was comparable to that of the latter. Elsewhere, the (neo)classicism of these authors is more clearly described. Roland-Manuel presented Roussel as an example of true classicism, in the sense that he does not stop at pastiche, at the superficial copy of models from the past, but «finds within itself a serenity that the greatest princes of art only discovered in total submission to the object [of their art]»⁶⁵. Hoérée seems to echo this idea in the following explanation from 1930:

The author of the *Suite in F* feels no need to set himself apart in the manner of a school leader and to confound the listener by making him accept as supreme innovation, as revolutionary credo, or as arid conquest over sound materials some Clementi, Bellini, or Hummel peppered with dissonances. In other words, Roussel is not pursuing a 'return to the past' for aesthetic purposes, but he is asserting his 'continuo style' which is no doubt rather like that of the eighteenth century, because it is generated freely, perfectly, and naturally⁶⁶.

The 'objective' attitude described by Hoérée places Roussel in the category of *living classicism* («*style continu*») while at the same time attacking *the other* 'objectivism', the one which for a decade had been attached to the Stravinsky approach. Stravinsky's name was not mentioned, as often happens in discussions of Roussel's (neo)classicism. However, the composer can be easily recognized behind critiques of a certain kind of 'return to the past' like the one expressed in the above

⁶⁴. PRUNIÈRES 1936-02, p. 81.

⁶⁵. «[...] trouve en lui-même une sérénité que les plus grands princes de l'art n'ont découverte que dans une étroite soumission à l'objet». ROLAND-MANUEL 1929-05, p. 887. Roussel himself had declared in a survey (1926-06) his defence of 'pure' music; in observing a «return to the classical tradition», he still did not identify with it.

⁶⁶. «L'auteur de la *Suite en fa* n'éprouve nullement le besoin de se singulariser par des gestes de chef d'école et de dérouter l'auditeur en lui faisant admettre comme suprême nouveauté, comme *credo* révolutionnaire, comme aride conquête sur la matière sonore, du Clementi, du Bellini ou du Hummel assaisonnés de dissonances. Autrement dit, Roussel ne poursuit aucun 'retour au passé' par volonté esthétique, mais il impose son 'style continu' sans doute assez proche de celui du XVIII^e siècle, parce qu'il s'y manifeste lui-même librement, de façon parfaite et naturelle». HOÉRÉE 1930-01, p. 70.

quotation. Stravinsky was instead well featured in Roland-Manuel's seminal article on Ravel's «aesthetics of imposture»: both composers are considered representative of the «*hygiène classique*» consisting of reasoning and «defiance of inspiration»⁶⁷. However, Roland-Manuel established a distinction between Stravinsky's path to objectivity (which excludes anything extramusical) and a French way, embodied in Ravel's music but dating back to Rameau and including Debussy, in which the extramusical is not erased but put at distance⁶⁸.

It is clear from these examples how the various (neo)classical attitudes belonging to the continuum delineated in TABLE 3 can overlap, as they are more often nuances than well-defined aesthetic programs. Nevertheless, it is possible to reconstruct the debate on (neo)classicism — since there was a true debate, often made of articles that answered each other — without giving in to the defeatist conclusion that each critic used concepts at will. In the following sections, therefore, discussions will be condensed to macro-trends and the nuances of each position examined within the macro-trend in which they were situated.

II.1 CONCEPTUALIZING CLASSICISM

A re-examination of the concept of 'classicism', the malleability of which interwar musicographers were well aware, is indispensable for understanding the debates on *new* classicism.⁶⁹ Despite the polysemy of the term, it is possible to isolate two⁷⁰ conceptualizations and three characterizations of classicism expressed in the French musical press of the interwar period:

⁶⁷. «la défiance de l'inspiration». ROLAND-MANUEL 1925-04, p. 17. A similar association of Stravinsky and Ravel «with the old masters of the seventeenth and eighteenth century» can be found in SCHLOEZER 1923-07-01. Stravinsky is absent from the two other articles on Ravel in our corpus, SUARÈS 1925-04 and BRUSSEL 1938-12.

⁶⁸. ROLAND-MANUEL 1925-04, pp. 20-21. One year before, the same critic recognized a «French essence» to Stravinsky's «classicism» (1924-06-15, p. 17). See below, end of § 'National Classicism'. On Roland-Manuel's role in the categorization of Ravel's path, see KELLY 2011.

⁶⁹. A recent synthesis of the concurring definition of the category of 'classic' (*classicality*) in a musicological perspective can be found in CHAPIN 2014, p. 148.

⁷⁰. A third one is anecdotal. According to Armand Machabey tonality defines the classical work as opposed to «dissident» music: «we will describe as *classical* any music that is monotonal in nature as inferred from Rameau's doctrine, and as *dissident* any polytonal or other music that tends to depart from monotonality, even from tonality itself, or to expand its scope» («nous qualifierons *classique* toute musique ressortissant à la monotonalité telle qu'on la déduit de la doctrine de Rameau; et *dissidente*, toute musique, polytonale, atonale ou autre, qui tend à s'affranchir de la monotonalité, de la tonalité même, ou d'en élargir le cadre»). MACHABEY 1929-01, p. 9.

a) Conceptualizations of classicism:

- Assimilation of classicism and objectivism (constructivist, formalist, intellectualist conception)
- Balance between expression and construction (humanistic conception, the right middle ground)

b) Characterizations of classicism:

- Universalizing
- Nationalizing
- Popularizing

The difference between conceptualization⁷¹ and characterization as I understand it occurs on the level of the *what* and the *how*: the former defines the what (to obtain a classical object it is necessary to do this and that), while the latter gives an attribute to the classical object whatever its definition (this object, since it is classical, carries such value, power or connotation — universalizing, nationalizing, popularizing).

Of particular note is the absence, in the considered corpus, of references to antiquity in association with the concept of classicism (the adjective *classique* stands for both classic and classical), which is never conceptualized as ‘referring to or inspired by antiquity’, nor characterized as ‘having an antiquarian value or connotation’⁷². Moreover, Schloezer openly opposed the very possibility that, in his time (he was writing in 1924), classicism could still be defined in association with a Greek ideal «as conceived by a Winckelmann», whereas «the works of the last hundred years» have clearly shown that Greece has never been a singular entity and that «Greek art was neither ‘reserved’, nor ‘modest’, nor ‘discreet’»⁷³. The two conceptualizations of classicism found in our corpus are keener to consider the concept in an a-temporal way than to equate it with a canon of ancient works. Since the two conceptualizations were in opposition to each other, they led to opposite conceptions of what *new* classicism meant and represented within the stage of music history that French musicographers were experiencing and to which they sought to give meaning.

⁷¹. We prefer ‘conceptualization’ to ‘definition’ because the definition is intended to be neutral, while in ‘conceptualization’ the emphasis is on the individual process of designing a concept.

⁷². In his book *Gabriel Fauré* (1927A), Charles Koechlin defended the classical, as Greek, character of his old master’s music (KOECHLIN 1927A). As MOORE 2022 has shown, this position was isolated and at odds with other ways of portraying Fauré as a ‘classic’ in the 1920s.

⁷³. «[...] ni ‘réservé’, ni ‘pudique’, ni ‘discret’». SCHLOEZER 1924-08, pp. 175-176.

II.1.1. CLASSICISM AS OBJECT-MAKING

Some of the texts in the musical press where the concepts of ‘classical’ or ‘classicism’ were brought up assimilated them to objectivism and constitute a constructivist, formalist, intellectualistic conception of what is classic(al). The combination of classicism and objectivism (*objectivisme, objectivité*) establishes a reaction against the psychological and sentimental principle as the driving force behind musical composition. Music is ‘classical’ when it is «devoid of any psychological meaning»⁷⁴, «impersonal [...] leading to the elimination of almost every emotional element»⁷⁵. Classical forms and procedures allow «objective expression»⁷⁶.

The concept of ‘realism’ or ‘sur-realism’⁷⁷ is sometimes employed as a synonym of objectivism and emphasizes the anti-romantic function of this *descriptive* and *material* approach to musical creation⁷⁸. Artists work as neutral ‘catalysers’ of reality, limiting themselves to transposing an object of reality into an object of art, as opposed to the ‘expressionist’ artists who are deeply influenced by what surrounds them. Note that the term ‘expressionism’ was often used in a broad sense. Expressionist artists are those who translate their feelings into music, in other words, those who *express* themselves through music. For instance, Schloezer contrasted the ‘expressionist’ Milhaud with the ‘classical’ Stravinsky in the following terms:

Milhaud is an expressionist and, in this sense, appears to be more akin to Schoenberg than to Stravinsky: if, to him, everything materializes musically, if his own reaction to the ‘sensitive’ and ‘intelligible’ world is a musical response, this music (which for a classical Stravinsky-like type leads to total autonomy and is only

⁷⁴. «[...] vide de toute signification psychologique». SCHLOEZER 1923-07, p. 252.

⁷⁵. «[...] impersonnelle [...] aboutissant à en éliminer presque tout élément émotionnel». BERTRAND 1924-06, p. 288.

⁷⁶. «[...] le problème des grandes formes et des grands moyens classiques d’expression objective qu’abordait Stravinsky». SOUVTCHINSKY 1932-01, p. 98.

⁷⁷. This term was first used by Guillaume Apollinaire in his 1917 programme notes to Satie’s *Parade*. Jacques Rivière employs it in an article (RIVIÈRE 1924) discussed by Schloezer in *La Revue musicale* (1924-03). Today, it may seem contradictory that the word ‘sur-realism’ could have been associated with a creative process emphasizing rationality. Yet, before Breton adopted it in 1924, the neologism proposed by Apollinaire was not related to psychic automatism but to the idea of transcending nature.

⁷⁸. «[...] a kind of creative description» («une sorte de description créatrice»). SCHLOEZER 1924-03, p. 272.

subject to its own logic) is governed by his inner life, adapts to its fluctuations, and reflects its slightest variations, like ultra-sensitive film. Milhaud's art is imbued with psychology⁷⁹.

'Expressionist' is, in this sense, a concept close to 'romantic'. In contrast to this alleged focus on the creative self, the 'classical' artist composes a perfectly designed product that loses all trace of its creator. According to Schloezer, such works «appear to us as an organic, natural synthesis of many different elements, such as Bach and eighteenth-century masters, sentimental or playful romance of the past era, and the rhythmic frenzy of negro-American music. This synthesis, this is our new classical style, otherwise called objective»⁸⁰. (Note that the plurality of the musical sources which converge into the new musical object is a distinctive trait of 'Objectivism', 3b in TABLE 3, compared to 'Historicism', 3a).

The materiality of the musical work conceived as an *object* was often addressed. Following the path traced by Stravinsky's 'Some Ideas about My *Octuor*'⁸¹ («My *Octuor* is a Musical Object»), Schloezer assessed the Piano Sonata in these terms: «the impression we get from the Sonata is one of finding ourselves in the presence of an 'object', of a tangible thing that really exists»⁸². Lourié would then take up this image in his description of Stravinsky's *Apollon*, arguing that the composer was now creating «objects of a purely musical nature which are essentially concrete»⁸³.

Through this kind of orthogonal projection in which the artist's subjectivity is absent, the work of art «imposes itself on us with that character of necessity and universality that until now only belonged to the purely formal sciences, like

⁷⁹. «Milhaud est un expressionniste et sous ce rapport il nous apparaît bien plus proche de Schoenberg que de Stravinsky: si toutes les choses pour lui se matérialisent musicalement, si sa propre réaction en face du monde 'sensible' et 'intelligible' est une réaction musicale, cette musique (qui chez un classique du type de Stravinsky parvient à l'autonomie complète et n'est soumise qu'à sa propre logique) est régie par sa vie intérieure, elle s'adapte aux fluctuations de celle-ci, elle reflète ses moindres variations, pareille à une pellicule ultra-sensible. L'art de Milhaud est imprégné de psychologie». SCHLOEZER 1925-03, p. 256.

⁸⁰. «[...] toutes œuvres qui nous apparaissent comme une synthèse organique, naturelle, d'éléments multiples et divers, tels que Bach et les maîtres du XVIII^e, la romance sentimentale ou enjouée du siècle passé et la frénésie rythmique de la musique négro-américaine. Cette synthèse, c'est notre nouveau style classique, autrement dit — objectif». SCHLOEZER 1923-12.

⁸¹. STRAVINSKY 1924/1979.

⁸². «[...] l'impression que nous ressentons devant la *Sonate* de nous trouver en présence d'un 'objet', d'une chose concrète qui existe réellement». SCHLOEZER 1925-11, p. 20.

⁸³. «[...] objets de nature purement musicale et qui sont essentiellement concrets». LOURIÉ 1927-12, p. 117.

mathematics»⁸⁴. The «until now» in the quotation is crucial. This process of objectification of art is *modern*: whether or not one associates it with the word ‘classicism’, it is not a retrograde step but the most advanced conquest of art.

Classical constructivism was especially developed and defended in relation to Stravinsky (who adopted it) by Schloezer and Ansermet. It is not surprising in this regard that the articles where this conceptualization is developed were either about Stravinsky⁸⁵ or gave a certain weight to the composer⁸⁶. However, in some cases a constructivist position was expressed without any reference to Stravinsky or even against him. The composer and conductor Désiré Pâque (1867-1939), for instance, in an article significantly entitled ‘Classicisme’ drew on Pierre Lalo’s *Esquisse d’une esthétique musicale scientifique* (1908) to promote a modern classical music which was *atonal*. This was the logical consequence of a constructivist definition of classicism requiring that «the essential points of the classical state include the reasoned and sober use of sound materials, the perfect order of detail and ensemble, [and] the judicious acceptance of new acquisitions»⁸⁷.

It is important to note that not all constructivist discourse advocating ‘objective’ music characterized it as ‘classical’ — it was actually quite rare. Sometimes the assimilation of the two concepts was indirect, and more frequently just absent. Ernest Ansermet, for instance, developed a thorough discussion of the subjectivity and objectivity of the musical work, the latter being characteristic of the «artisan» Stravinsky, whose work «neither describes nor narrates things, but manifests them»⁸⁸. Ansermet never defined Stravinsky’s constructive attitude as (neo)classical, and instead called it «epic» and medieval (in the sense of craft work)⁸⁹. It was only in 1925, when discourse on neoclassicism was more current,

⁸⁴. «[...] s’impose à nous avec ce caractère de nécessité et d’universalité qui n’appartenait jusqu’ici qu’aux sciences purement formelles, telles que les mathématiques». SCHLOEZER 1924-03, p. 273.

⁸⁵. See TABLE 1; in particular, SCHLOEZER 1923-12 and ANSERMET 1925-03.

⁸⁶. See articles with a + in TABLE 2; in particular, SCHLOEZER 1923-07, BERTRAND 1924-06, and ANSERMET 1926-12.

⁸⁷. «Les points essentiels de l’état classique comprennent l’emploi raisonné et sobre du matériel sonore, la parfaite ordonnance des détails et de l’ensemble, [et] l’acceptation judicieuse des acquisitions nouvelles». PÂQUE 1931-04, p. 346.

⁸⁸. «[...] une œuvre de Stravinsky ne décrit ni ne raconte les choses, mais les manifeste». ANSERMET 1921-07, p. 8. As for Schloezer, a developed discussion of the objectivity of the musical work without any reference to Stravinsky or classicism can be found in his review (SCHLOEZER 1927A) of LANDRY 1927.

⁸⁹. «Je ne vois pas, pour indiquer la nature de cet art, de meilleure désignation que celle d’*épique*». ANSERMET 1921-07, p. 8, original emphasis. As far as I know, Henri Monnet is the first,

that Ansermet affirmed that this «definitive conquest of pure music» represented «the establishment of a new classicism»⁹⁰.

As with any definition with a somewhat simple appearance, constructivist classicism had nuances depending on who was expressing it. Ansermet specified that *objective does not mean impersonal*, and that personality should not manifest itself at the basic level of the invention of the material (hence the use of existing materials) but in the way materials are used⁹¹. In this regard, Ansermet makes a connection with cubism: «it seems that what should have been successive is simultaneous, and what should have been simultaneous is successive»⁹². This «other organization, just as arbitrary, but no less plausible, of the elements of tempered music», this «new order, not systematic, but empirical, which satisfies the double necessity of invention and logic of any work of art»⁹³ would make Landormy argue, in his already mentioned polemic with Schloezer (see fn. 39), that so-called classical art was, on the contrary, very romantic, because it was at the whim of the composer to arrange these found musical objects⁹⁴. Indeed, Ansermet emphasized the almost destructive (and therefore romantic) side of the «classicisme nouveau» that he delineated in relation to Stravinsky⁹⁵. It is not the classicism of reproduction in which there is a classical model that dictates the canon to follow ('Historicism', 3a in TABLE 3). It is rather an operation of recontextualization and resemantization of basic elements to which a new order must be given to purge them of their meanings and automatisms (rich in connotations) accumulated throughout history and thus achieve an ideal objectivity (type 3b). Ansermet maintained that the classical side (in the sense of constructed, ordered) of this cubist enterprise was ensured by counterpoint, one of the elements that Wheeldon has shown to

in 1926, who critically discusses in the musical press Ansermet's neothomism and Jean Maritain's influence on the defence of the objective character of music (MONNET 1926-02).

⁹⁰. «C'est la conquête définitive de la musique pure, l'instauration d'un classicisme nouveau». ANSERMET 1925-03, p. 18.

⁹¹. For Ansermet, the author's 'race' plays a major role in his personality (*ibidem*, pp. 18-19).

⁹². «[...] il semble que se trouve simultanément ce qui devait être successif, et successif ce qui devait être simultanément». *Ibidem*, p. 19. The association between Stravinsky's music and cubism was commonplace in music criticism. For a broader cultural discussion of Russian 'Cubo-Futurist' models for Stravinsky, see CARR 2014, chap. 'The Emergence of Stravinsky's Neoclassicism', pp. 7-34.

⁹³. «[...] autre organisation, tout aussi arbitraire, mais non moins plausible, des éléments de la musique tempérée [...] ordre nouveau, non systématique, mais empirique, qui satisfait à la double nécessité d'invention et de logique de toute œuvre d'art». ANSERMET 1925-03, p. 20.

⁹⁴. LANDORMY 1929-07.

⁹⁵. ANSERMET 1925-03, p. 18.

be most representative of the anti-Debussyst reaction. Stravinsky constructed «through the implementation of contrapuntal relationships of a cohesive force yet unimaginable»⁹⁶, thus being classical even in its potentially romantic impulse.

A similar link between classicism, cubism, and counterpoint was made, a few years earlier, by Landormy, whose discourse went beyond the case of Stravinsky. Landormy put together Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and Les Six, all representatives of the musical equivalent of cubism, which he described as «the revenge of the classical spirit», because it did not yield to the personal but «seeks to express the permanent and universal aspects of reality»⁹⁷. The new order embodied by cubism is thus simultaneously a reaction and a *retour* to classicism⁹⁸: a reaction against an excessive stretching of the classical principles of musical language («*l'ordre établi*», the established order)⁹⁹ and a way to go back to their very essence. One of the common features of the «young school» is described as «le retour au contrepoint», following the example of Ravel¹⁰⁰ and Satie who «while Debussy strayed into impressionism, continued on his little classical path. He was preparing the return to lost tradition»¹⁰¹.

In Schloezer's writings, Stravinsky's destructive and subjective dimension is more nuanced, and is not seen as a historical necessity: «I do not believe that sentimentalism threatens us»¹⁰². For him, Stravinsky's research aimed to «rediscover the secret of classical art, of that art that introduces movement into things themselves, that grasps things directly and recreates them as they are, in action on their own»¹⁰³. It was therefore not a question, as for Ansermet, of purifying the materials and assembling them in a 'cubist' way, but of discovering the rules

⁹⁶. «[...] par la mise en œuvre de rapports contrapuntiques d'une force de cohésion encore insoupçonnée». ANSERMET 1926-12, p. 91.

⁹⁷. «[...] la revanche de l'esprit classique», «cherch[e] à exprimer les aspects permanents et universels de la réalité». LANDORMY 1921-02, p. 98.

⁹⁸. *Ibidem*.

⁹⁹. *Ibidem*, p. 112.

¹⁰⁰. «With Maurice Ravel, reason, order, all these qualities cherished by the classical crowd regain an importance they seemed to have lost in impressionist art» («Avec Maurice Ravel la raison, l'ordre, toutes les qualités chères aux classiques reprennent une importance qu'elles semblaient avoir perdue dans l'art impressionniste»). *Ibidem*, p. 101.

¹⁰¹. «[...] pendant que Debussy s'égarait dans l'impressionnisme [...] continuait sa petite route classique. Il préparait le retour à la tradition perdue». *Ibidem*, p. 107.

¹⁰². «[...] je ne crois pas que le sentimentalisme nous menace». SCHLOEZER 1925-06, p. 285.

¹⁰³. «[...] retrouver le secret de l'art classique, de cet art qui introduit le mouvement dans les choses mêmes, qui saisit les choses directement et les recrée telles qu'elles sont, agissantes par elles-mêmes». SCHLOEZER 1923-12, p. 122.

by which these materials could be combined on their own. Schloezer explained that Stravinsky had found this «secret» by proceeding through successive objectivations¹⁰⁴ and took part in the movement of composers who granted Bach the role of «professor of discipline»¹⁰⁵. Thus, Stravinsky is said to have discovered classical, objective art, which «consists of conferring a work of art with an absolute and completely autonomous existence by incorporating only purely formal considerations into its structure»¹⁰⁶. However, the issue of the personality and therefore subjectivity is not dismissed, and emerges in the Schloezerian distinction between *style* (collective, of an era, of a place) and *manière* (the personal way that each artist has of incorporating a style)¹⁰⁷.

One could argue that the only way for composers to be truly objective — to ensure that music builds itself — would in fact be for them to limit themselves to archaizing pastiches. As Schloezer noted, this was made easy by the number of new performances and editions of works from the past¹⁰⁸. But this path was what everyone (for or against Stravinsky) condemned, starting with the composer himself¹⁰⁹. Indeed, the objective classicism that Schloezer praised in Stravinsky's work is the result of a tension, an inner struggle against the feelings that yearn to direct the composer's pen — any association of Stravinsky's approach with an ironic purpose is far removed from Schloezer's analysis. Schloezer warned against the danger of *sécheresse* (coldness) produced by compositional machinism: he condemned «all the powerless, all the weak-spirited and narrow-minded [who] are eager to camouflage themselves as classical»¹¹⁰ and also the intellectualism of Schoenberg¹¹¹. But at the same time, he stated that «there is coldness and then there is coldness»: «coldness only has aesthetic value if it is the result of a constraint, if it comes from internal struggle, incessantly renewed against the sentiments, emotions, and passions that tend to invade an artist's entire personality»¹¹². The good coldness

¹⁰⁴. *Ibidem*, pp. 122-123.

¹⁰⁵. «professeur de discipline». SCHLOEZER 1927-02, p. 167.

¹⁰⁶. «[...] consiste à prêter à l'œuvre d'art une existence absolue et complètement autonome en ne faisant intervenir dans sa structure que des considérations purement formelles». SCHLOEZER 1923-12, p. 133.

¹⁰⁷. SCHLOEZER 1929-02, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸. *Ibidem*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁹. STRAVINSKY 1927-12.

¹¹⁰. «[...] tous les impuissants, tous les esprits pauvres et étriqués [qui] ont hâte de se camoufler en classiques». SCHLOEZER 1925-06, p. 285.

¹¹¹. SCHLOEZER 1939/2011.

¹¹². «[...] il y a sécheresse et sécheresse», «la sécheresse ne vaut esthétiquement que si elle est le produit d'une contrainte, si elle résulte d'une lutte intérieure, sans cesse renouvelée contre

of Stravinsky, a «cold and pure» music nonetheless rich in «emotional power», resulted from «tremendous efforts», «comes at a high price»¹¹³.

Schloezer would eventually note, in 1930, the end of this characteristic struggle. By then, the difficulty of its conquest, which was the value of Stravinsky's constructivist classicism, had given way to an easy automatism. It was an «objective dynamism» (*dynamisme objectif*) in which, «as in sport, effort becomes a goal in itself»¹¹⁴. But since «one no longer feels the effort» (the author was thinking of *The Fairy Kiss* and *Capriccio*), «this inner tension [...] is now giving way to an ease that no longer seems to demand major sacrifices on the part of the composer»¹¹⁵. This is «no longer classicism, it's academicism»¹¹⁶.

II.1.2. CLASSICISM AS BALANCE BETWEEN EXPRESSION AND CONSTRUCTION

An aporia is apparent: on one hand, the return to a classical spirit necessarily contains romantic elements in itself and, on the other hand, the total renunciation of the subjective in order to seek pure objectivity doesn't result in a classical work but in pastiche or academic copying. The destructive will, the subjectivity that guides the creation of a new order and the very choice of materials to be retained — whether it is a choice made cold-heartedly (*à la* Ansermet) or resulting from an inner struggle against the advice of sentiment (*à la* Schloezer) — therefore seems to haunt the blending of classicism and objectivism. As a result, Stravinsky's (neo)classicism is not (because it cannot be) as objective as its promoters claim.

les sentiments, les émotions, les passions qui ont la tendance à envahir la personnalité tout entière d'artiste». SCHLOEZER 1925-06, p. 285.

¹¹³. «[...] froide et pure [...] puissance émotive [...] formidables efforts [...] se paye cher». *Ibidem*, p. 286.

¹¹⁴. «[...] comme dans le sport, l'effort devient un but en soi». SCHLOEZER 1926-01A, p. 10-11.

¹¹⁵. «[...] cette tension intérieure [...] fait place maintenant à une aisance qui paraît ne plus exiger de grands sacrifices de la part du compositeur». SCHLOEZER 1930-02, p. 146.

¹¹⁶. «[...] ce n'est plus du classicisme, c'est de l'académisme». SCHLOEZER 1930-02, p. 146. A similar opposition can be found in an article opposing Debussy (the truly classical one) and Saint-Saëns (the academic neo-classical one): «Debussy is classical, Saint-Saëns is not» («Debussy est classique, Saint-Saëns ne l'est point»). GOLDBECK 1931-03, p. 281. This article discusses Alfredo Casella's defence of the «restoration of classicism (*classicit *) in art» (CASELLA 1931-02, p. 39). Frederick Goldbeck claims that Debussy is an example of a true «classic» since his music presents a balance between form and content, in contrast to the «neo-classics, in which *representation* prevails».

Nevertheless, it can still be 'classical', since the 'classical' (pre-romantic) music from which the composer drew his inspiration was not as objective as one might expect. This is the argument of the authors who contrast the assimilation of classicism and objectivism with a conceptualization of classicism as balance between expression and construction. This conception could be called *humanistic*, since it does not want to take humankind out of music, and of the *happy medium*, in the sense that it appeals to the principle of the middle ground (the ancient — classical — principle of *aurea mediocritas*).

As Danuser pointed out, this is not the same as Winckelmann's pre-Romantic, Greece-inspired balance between 'noble simplicity and tranquil greatness'¹¹⁷. It is not a question, either, of the purely intellectual equilibrium advocated by the nationalist artists who signed the manifesto 'Pour un parti de l'intelligence' in the literary supplement of *Le Figaro* on July 19, 1919, who sought a «reconstruction according to the same principles as found in the laws of thought, in order to safeguard civilization from the threats of Bolshevist ignorance»¹¹⁸. Moreover, the conceptualization of classicism as an ideal balance of expression and construction does not necessarily express an anti-Stravinsky position. It can be found for instance in Arthur Lourié's praising and programmatic article on the Piano Sonata¹¹⁹. The composer, at the time very close to Stravinsky¹²⁰, placed his colleague's composition in opposition to the romantic and impressionist tendency to sacrifice the form to subjectivity¹²¹, claiming that Stravinsky's *Sonata* was the 'prototypical form' (*forme-type*) of the sonata¹²². Its essence was not the independence of the 'things themselves' (*les choses mêmes*) mentioned by Schloezer¹²³, but rather a balance resulting from a struggle between the individual and the material: «it is the struggle between the principle of individual emotion and the principle of the foundations

¹¹⁷. DANUSER 2004, p. 261.

¹¹⁸. «Reconstruction selon des principes identiques qu'on retrouvera dans les lois de la pensée afin que sauvegarder la civilisation des menaces d'ignorance bolchévistes». For a discussion of this position, see FULCHER 1999A, pp. 201, 213.

¹¹⁹. LOURIÉ 1925-08.

¹²⁰. Regarding the relationship between the two composers, see MÓRICZ 2013.

¹²¹. In Lourié's view, to the inorganicity of the post-Beethoven sonatas (inorganicity due to the fact that, to follow the life of the musical subject, composers abandon formal constraints), Stravinsky opposes a return to the «dramatic action» (*action dramatique*) and «expressive dynamism» (*dynamisme expressif*) of the «neoclassical sonata, of which the last Beethoven sonatas are both the starting point and the peak» («dont les dernières sonates de Beethoven sont à la fois le point de départ et le sommet»). LOURIÉ 1925-08, p. 100.

¹²². On this point, see also SCHLOEZER 1927-06, p. 292.

¹²³. See above fn. 103.

of sound itself»¹²⁴. This is in fact the struggle Schloezer was talking about. But in Schloezer's case, to emerge a winner from the struggle, it was necessary to destroy the personal side in order to let the material organize itself. By contrast, Lourié (at least in this article) admitted that a certain degree of subjectivity is always present. Here the model is Beethoven, but elsewhere Lourié points to Bach as the epitome of equilibrium between form and content:

It was thought that in Bach, the lost paradise of objective music would be found. But it had to be acknowledged that Bach's objectivity was relative and purely formal. Beyond this, Bach was just as 'subjective' as anyone else¹²⁵.

Lourié's article on *Oedipus rex* makes clear that this subjectivity is in fact a brake on the objectivization of music, which must therefore seek other models — Handel, in particular. Lourié thus explained Stravinsky's 'return to Handel' by rejecting Bach's excessive subjectivism, which Lourié believed to be absent from Handel's music: «Stravinsky moved on from Bach to Handel, because Bach is deeply individual, while Handel is completely impersonal»¹²⁶.

Nonetheless, in the 1920s, Bach was sometimes considered the icon of objective calculation and formal perfection. (Perhaps this was due to his association with piano training, school mechanical exercise, although Bach's «expressive power» had been rediscovered in France since the end of the nineteenth century¹²⁷). By questioning this preconceived idea and recognizing in Bach's music a balance between mathematical construction and individual content, Lourié shared the

¹²⁴. «[...] c'est la lutte entre le principe d'émotivité individuelle et le principe des bases de sonorité en soi». LOURIÉ 1925-08, p. 100.

¹²⁵. «On pensait, en Bach, retrouver le paradis perdu d'une musique objective. Mais il fallut bien reconnaître que chez Bach l'objectivité est toute relative et purement formelle. Hors ce domaine, Bach est aussi 'subjectif' que quiconque». LOURIÉ 1932-12, p. 63. Thanks to his terminology borrowed from Jacques Maritain, Lourié can refine the question of the 'subjective' present in an objective process: he distinguishes between the individual and the personal, and affirms that «the art of Bach represents the affirmation of the *personal* and its victory over the *individual*» («l'art de Bach représente l'affirmation du *personnel* et sa victoire sur l'*individuel*»). LOURIÉ 1932-12, p. 63, original emphasis. This stance seems to correct what Lourié expressed a few years earlier in his article on *Oedipus rex* (see below in the text). On Lourié's debt to Maritain's philosophy see DUFOUR 2009.

¹²⁶. «Stravinsky quitte Bach pour Haendel, parce que Bach est profondément individuel, tandis que Haendel est complètement impersonnel». LOURIÉ 1927-06, p. 243.

¹²⁷. The expression «puissance expressive» is taken from BOUYER 1908. On this topic see ELLIS 2005, pp. 234-240, and FLINT 2006, pp. 336-346.

position expressed specifically by Koechlin, who committed himself against all claimed returns to a false, strictly objectivist Bach. Koechlin contested with some outrage the penitential function that some (notably Jacques Rivière)¹²⁸ attributed to the return to Bach. Mimicking the ancient master was considered by some composers and critics to be a counter-reformist path necessary for purging oneself of «Beethovenian, Franckist or Wagnerian pathétique» as well as of «Fauré's [or] Debussy's *expressionism* (I cannot write *impressionism*, really!)» in order to achieve «*pure music* which does not intend to mean anything» and to write fugues, «or rather fugue drafts: adapted to the needs of an era where we know the price of time»¹²⁹. Was this really a return *to Bach*, Koechlin wondered? Rather, this was a return to «a *general style of the period* from 1650 to 1750»¹³⁰ where what was specific to Bach — his sensitivity — had been suppressed:

So, what is so special about Bach? First, his sensitivity. I know this gets overlooked. Since in theory pure music is not expressionist, and since Bach is claimed as a model, things must be sorted out about the master of expression: he is camouflaged with well-meaning scholastics, purified of this toxin — the element of sensitivity. [...] It's akin to mistaking Fra Angelico for the head of school for non-expressive painting. [...] Bach is all sensitivity¹³¹.

The admirable thing is that [Bach's music] is at once very expressive [...] and perfectly constructed: this shows us that it is inaccurate to implicitly contrast construction and expression, as we do¹³².

¹²⁸. Koechlin quotes from SCHAEFFNER 1925.

¹²⁹. «[...]le] pathétique beethovénien, franckiste ou wagnérien [...]']*expressionnisme* fauréen [ou] debussyste (décidément, je ne puis écrire *impressionnisme*!) [...] de la *musique pure*, et qui ne prétend à rien signifier. Et des fugues. Ou plutôt des esquisses de fugues: adaptées aux besoins d'une époque où l'on sait le prix du temps». KOECHLIN 1926-11, p. 3, original emphasis.

¹³⁰. «[...] un *style général de l'époque* de 1650 à 1750». *Ibidem*, original emphasis.

¹³¹. «Or, qu'est-ce donc, le propre de Bach? D'abord, sa sensibilité. Je sais qu'on la néglige. Comme, en principe, il est posé que la musique pure n'est pas *expressionniste* et comme Bach, d'autre part, on prétend l'avoir pour modèle, il faut bien arranger les choses au sujet du maître de l'expression: on le camoufle en une sorte de scholastique bienfaisant, pur de cette toxine: l'élément sensible. [...] C'est à peu près comme de prendre Fra Angelico pour le chef d'une école de peinture non expressive. [...] Bach est tout sensibilité». *Ibidem*, pp. 2-3.

¹³². «L'admirable, c'est que [la musique de Bach] est à la fois *très expressive* [...] et parfaitement *construite*: cela nous montre qu'il est inexact d'opposer implicitement, comme on le fait, construction et expression». KOECHLIN 1924-10, p. 323.

On a more technical level, Koechlin argued that the so-called Bachian counterpoint replicated by his contemporaries was not Bachian at all (neither in the form of «harsh and complex polytonality» nor of hedonistic simplification). Moreover, he claimed that it would be a mistake to consider Bach's form as something fixed¹³³. Finally, Koechlin threw his triple anathema:

The only dispute is that contemporaries have a monopoly on a return to Bach. We're disputing the very fact of it really being 'a return' when there are so many other ways to pay tribute to him. In fact, we're formally disputing anyone's right to mention this great name in support of a 'revolt against sensitivity'¹³⁴.

Note that the word *sensibilité* (sensitivity, extremely common in the writings of the time) refers to the domain of the human (soul, feelings, expression) in contrast to the domain of objectivity and mathematics. Therefore in Koechlin's view the revolt against sensitivity means a bias in favour of calculation over expression¹³⁵.

Koechlin's defence of the sensitivity of the classics extended beyond Bach. In an article on the «vain dispute» between supposedly intellectual classical music and 'impressionist' modern music, Koechlin dismantled the categories traditionally used to explain the beauty of classical style (regularity, order, clarity, etc.). He maintained that logic alone «is *never* music's true beauty»¹³⁶, because mathematical and literary logic (which concerns ideas) is not the same as musical logic, the former being based on reason while the latter, «mysterious and complex [...] depends on all kinds of things: on feeling, on its development, on the nature of the author, on the character of the work»¹³⁷.

¹³³. KOECHLIN 1926-11, pp. 6-7.

¹³⁴. «On conteste seulement que les contemporains aient le monopole d'un retour à Bach. On conteste même que cela soit vraiment 'y revenir', alors qu'il est tant d'autres façons de lui rendre hommage. On conteste enfin à quiconque, et formellement, le droit d'évoquer ce grand nom pour soutenir une 'révolte contre la sensibilité'». *Ibidem*, p. 12. Schloezer responded to Koechlin justifying the expression 'retour à Bach' (1927-02). On the controversy between Koechlin and Schloezer over the return to Bach, see DUCHESNEAU 2023.

¹³⁵. Koechlin explains this contrast in detail in two articles from 1929 (KOECHLIN 1929; 1929-02).

¹³⁶. «Elle ne constitue *jamais* à elle seule la beauté véritable de la musique». KOECHLIN 1921-03, p. 229, original emphasis. Thus, «in Bach's fugues, what is beautiful is not at all that the themes enter at regular intervals, nor it is such symmetry, but *what the themes say with all the music thus realized*» («dans les fugues de Bach, ce qui est beau, ce n'est pas du tout que les thèmes entrent à intervalles réguliers et ce n'est point telle symétrie, mais *ce que disent les thèmes avec toute la musique ainsi réalisée*»). *Ibidem*, original emphasis.

¹³⁷. «[...] mystérieuse et complexe [...] dépend de toutes sortes de choses: du sentiment, de son développement, de la nature de l'auteur, du caractère de l'œuvre». KOECHLIN 1921-03, p. 231.

In three articles on *Pierrot lunaire* from 1922, Koechlin pointed out that, first, classical works could not be reduced to a series of rules the respect of which determines the value of a musical work and, second, that the so-called classical composers were the first innovators¹³⁸. Therefore, to become the «classically-minded of the future»¹³⁹ the study of tradition is fundamental, but a formulaic imitation of the elder composers is far from being the right way to proceed. In essence, intellectualism in music is only a form of academicism (and in this he aligns with Schloezer); this does not create classical composers, but *gens à formules* (formulaic people)¹⁴⁰. As Prunières would state in his review of current music trends fifteen years later — in line with the already quoted position of Schloezer at the same period — «this neo-classicism was to turn out to be more of a neo-academism»¹⁴¹. Koechlin advocated for music to remain human, whatever technical approach is adopted: beauty is achieved through construction, but construction alone cannot produce true music:

The only issue is that a work be beautiful — programme music, evocative or not, no matter!... In fact, if every beautiful work is thus constructed, there are infinite ways to construct. [...] That a musician intends to translate such a thing, or is not fully aware of what creative intuition leads him to say, does not matter: he always says something. Or, he is useless, and his music as well.

I do not believe in the existence of music that is simply a series of notes... and devoid of all humanity. But I do believe in this

See also René Dumesnil's appreciation of Pierre-Octave Ferroud's *esprit classique* which doesn't result in a surface copy of the forms of the «ancestors»: «if he turns to the past, it is not with the stilted and constrained attitude of those who pretend to go back in time, to 'return' to this or that venerable ancestor, for whom it is not quite certain they have understood the thinking nor discovered the profound originality beneath the appearance of superficial forms» («s'il se tourne vers le passé, ce n'est point avec l'attitude guindée et contrainte de ceux qui affectent de revenir en arrière, de faire 'retour' à tel ou tel vénérable ancêtre, dont on n'est pas bien sûr qu'ils ont compris la pensée et découvert l'originalité profonde sous l'apparence des formes superficielles»). DUMESNIL 1931-04. Ferroud has written about the concept of (neo)classicism on several occasions, but not in the musical press. His writings, which are therefore not included in our corpus, were studied by MELKIS-BIHLER 1995, pp. 238-257.

¹³⁸. KOECHLIN 1922-02, 1922-03, and 1922-04. The reference is clearly Schloezer's already quoted assertion about «purely formal sciences, such as mathematics». SCHLOEZER 1924-03, p. 273; see above fn. 84.

¹³⁹. «classiques de l'avenir». KOECHLIN 1922-02, p. 49.

¹⁴⁰. KOECHLIN 1921-03, p. 232.

¹⁴¹. «[...] ce néo-classicisme allait se révéler plutôt un néo-académisme». PRUNIÈRES 1936-01, p. 37. For Schloezer, see above fn. 116.

double danger: despising sensitivity [...] and accepting that a musical art could do without this human element¹⁴².

Along with Koechlin, two other critics repeatedly expressed a happy medium conception of classicism, Arthur Hoérée and Jean Huré. Hoérée criticized objectivism as formulated by Ansermet and Schloezer and pointed out that style did not necessarily correspond to the expressive content (a ‘return to’ can therefore lead to a more expressionist piece than an atonal composition). The true lesson of classicism, he claimed, should be the balance «between form and substance, between *what?* and *how?*»¹⁴³ — or, in Huré’s terms, between the «*sensory* and [the] *intellectual*»¹⁴⁴ — , and not the negation of any content.

Jean Huré introduced a very interesting element in the perspective of a ‘culturally informed music historiography’. Indeed, a remark by this celebrated pianist and organist about the interpretation of ‘classical’ works (i.e., eighteenth-century) opens an interesting avenue (which I will not develop here) to explain why classicality and objectivism have been equated. What if the «false interpretation of the return to the eighteenth century»¹⁴⁵ denounced by the partisans of a balance between form and content derived (at least in part) from a ‘false’ way of performing the musical works from that period? Huré denounced the prejudices that lead to performing this music without expression: «General ignorance leads the virtuoso to perform with incoherent fancy the authors he does not consider *classical* and the *classical* ones with the distressing monotony that, in the past, they tried to impose on me»¹⁴⁶. According to Huré, this attitude can be attributed to the fact that «old

¹⁴². «La seule question, c’est qu’une œuvre soit belle — musique à programme, évocatrice ou non, qu’importe! [...] D’ailleurs, si toute œuvre belle est par là même construite, il existe une infinité de manières de construire. [...] Que le musicien *prémédite* de traduire telle chose, ou ne se rende pas un compte exact de ce que l’*intuition créatrice* l’amène à dire, peu importe: il dit toujours quelque chose. Ou bien, c’est qu’il est nul, et sa musique aussi. Je ne crois guère à l’existence d’une musique simple jeu de notes [...] et vide de toute chose humaine. Mais je crois à ce double danger: mépriser la sensibilité [...] et admettre qu’un art musical se puisse passer de cet élément humain». KOECHLIN 1924-10, p. 324. An articulated development of this issue (the impossibility of a purely ‘objective’ music) can be found in LANDORMY 1925-05 (with no allusion to Stravinsky, but rather discussing Ravel).

¹⁴³. «[...] entre la forme et le fonds, entre le *quoi?* et le *comment?*». HOÉRÉE 1928-02, p. 222. See also HOÉRÉE 1930-01, p. 70.

¹⁴⁴. «[...] *sensoriel* et *intellectuel*». HURÉ 1928-10, p. 584, original emphasis.

¹⁴⁵. «[...] fausse interprétation du retour au XVIII^e». HOÉRÉE 1928-02, p. 222.

¹⁴⁶. «Une ignorance générale amène le virtuose à jouer avec une fantaisie incohérente les auteurs qu’il ne croit pas *classiques* et les *classiques* avec cette monotonie désolante qu’on voulait

manuscripts and editions usually bear no indication of dynamics or changes in rhythm»¹⁴⁷. Does the idea that classical equals objective find a cultural justification in this fact? Can we therefore assume an aesthetic relationship (and not only a contextual one or one that is reflected in the practice of pastiche) between the wave of rediscovery of early music and the conceptualization of preromantic music as objective? To venture down this research path, Schloezer's articles about Wanda Landowska are of great interest: «she doesn't interpret; she is satisfied with playing what is written, as it is written», he wrote in an article for *La Nouvelle Revue française* in 1930¹⁴⁸.

Koehlin was rather inclined to believe that the origin of the false association between classicism and intellectualism lay in the field of discourse. Since music critics are mainly trained in the fields of literature and the visual arts¹⁴⁹, they lack the training (and ability) to grasp purely musical sensitivity and therefore label any music without extra-musical reference as inexpressive:

[...] writers and painters, in their habit of specifying to themselves the meaning of a string quartet by words or by things seen [...], these strangers to our art sometimes fail to perceive it *musically*: and when it is a question of 'pure' (but sensitive) music, they imagine that it 'expresses nothing' because it is not descriptive or because it does not comment on any literary text. This no doubt explains the error that leads them to suppose that this pure music remains beyond all sensitivity¹⁵⁰.

jadis m'imposer». HURÉ 1928-09, p. 284, original emphasis.

¹⁴⁷. «[...] les vieux manuscrits et éditions anciennes ne portent, le plus souvent, aucune indication de nuances, ni de modifications du rythme». *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁸. «[...] elle n'interprète pas; elle se contente de jouer ce qui est écrit et comme s'est écrit». SCHLOEZER 1930/2011, p. 158. See also a later interview with the performer about the art of «playing exactly as it is written». SCHLOEZER 1933/2011, p. 154. For a quite different position stressing instead the expressive nature of harpsichord playing see SCHAEFFNER 1927-06.

¹⁴⁹. Koehlin had previously defended the legitimacy of criticism by non-composers and provoked a polemic with Schloezer. See KOEHLIN 1927B, SCHLOEZER 1927B, and KOEHLIN 1927C. See also DUCHESNEAU 2018, pp. 25-28.

¹⁵⁰. «[...] les littérateurs et les peintres, dans leur habitude de se spécifier, par des mots ou par des choses vues, la signification d'un quatuor à cordes [...], ces étrangers, parfois, à notre art, ne savent le percevoir *musicalemment*: et lorsqu'il s'agit de 'musique pure' (mais sensible), ils se figurent qu'elle 'n'exprime rien' parce qu'elle n'est pas descriptive ou qu'elle ne commente aucun texte littéraire. De là, sans doute, l'erreur qui les porte à supposer que cette musique pure reste en dehors de toute sensibilité». KOEHLIN 1929-02, p. 62.

II.2 CHARACTERIZING CLASSICISM, ASSESSING NEW CLASSICISM

Whatever their conception of classicism, how did interwar French musicographers assess the musical trends invoking some kind of return to ‘classical’? What were the criteria that made the invocation of a new classicism be judged positively or negatively? To answer these questions, we first need to address the characterization of classicism — whether it was considered a nationalizing, universalizing, or popularizing path for new music.

II.2.1. NATIONAL CLASSICISM

Between the defeat at Sedan (1870) and the First World War, identity-based discourses claiming the essentially classical nature of French ‘genius’ became veritable aesthetic manifestos in literature (beginning notably with the Roman school founded by Jean Moréas in 1886). French art was considered inherently classical, based as it was on measure, order, and clarity — «the French genius of beautiful order»¹⁵¹. Due to the influence of people like Maurice Barrès or Charles Maurras, the aesthetic of a return to order and classical simplicity in literature often went hand in hand with a monarchist, anti-Dreyfus, vehemently nationalist political stance¹⁵². As clearly shown by Messing, the literary debate moved into the world of music during the early part of the century, mainly through press inquiries that aimed to define French music in comparison to German music¹⁵³. The nationalist potential of a new music that could uphold these qualities, primarily by a return to eighteenth-century French models, was repeated and put into practice by composers, and supported by publishers¹⁵⁴.

The association between the classical spirit and French artistic tradition was therefore far from being new in the interwar period, and was reported in the musical press almost as a matter of course¹⁵⁵. For example, the loss of «such classical and such French [qualities] of balance and measure» is characteristic, according

¹⁵¹. «[...] le génie français de la belle ordonnance». FEBVRE-LONGERAY 1930, p. 226.

¹⁵². For a reconstruction of these debates in the press, please refer to the seminal work by Michel Décaudin (DÉCAUDIN 1960, pp. 309-351).

¹⁵³. MESSING 1996, pp. 7-13.

¹⁵⁴. See *Ibidem*, pp. 24-59 for a general overview. On the editorial resurrection of the classics in a nationalistic spirit, see MAWER – KELLY – MOORE – SADLER 2023.

¹⁵⁵. See LAZZARO 2018, p. 232-236.

to Paul Dukas¹⁵⁶, of all contemporary production: artistic chaos, loss of identity, and loss of value go together, if one believes in the association between balance, French spirit, and classicism (in the sense of that which endures). The fact remains that, in the corpus considered for the present study, nationalism is rarely present in discourse where (neo)classicism is explicitly mentioned.

Koechlin's 'D'une nouvelle mode musicale' (1921-08) could be taken as an example of discourse that questions the potential integration of 'classical' French qualities and the «new musical fashion» (the article comments critically on «young people» — Les Six). Koechlin began by repeating the adagio of classical French qualities to qualify not the eighteenth-century masters but those of the previous generation, which Cocteau and company attacked in *Le Coq et l'Arlequin*:

The admirable expansion of modern French music is well known: everything it found, everything it accomplished. It has not been said enough that it is *a classical art*, and that this century will remain a significant era in music history. In *Pelléas* as in *Pénélope*, there are national qualities, the most purely French: concision, discretion, lucid discernment in the choice of means — and the most universal one, sensitivity¹⁵⁷.

Could these qualities be applied to the everyday music that these young musicians are banking on for the future of French music?

One could then wonder if these partisans of 'cookie-cutter music' would be willing to make harmonious and classical (by composing and adapting them to the habitual order of our spirit, to our conception of Beauty and to the nature of our feelings) the African rhythms of the foxtrot and the jazz band. Will they succeed? Will they even want to try¹⁵⁸?

¹⁵⁶. «[...] si classiques et si françaises de l'équilibre, de la mesure». DUKAS 1928.

¹⁵⁷. «On sait l'admirable expansion de la musique française moderne: tout ce qu'elle a trouvé, tout ce qu'elle a réalisé. On n'a pas assez dit que c'est *un art classique*, et que ce siècle restera *comme* une grande époque de l'histoire musicale. Il y a dans *Pelléas* et dans *Pénélope* des qualités nationales, les plus purement françaises: de concision, de discrétion, de discernement lucide dans le choix des moyens — et la plus universelle sensibilité». KOECHLIN 1921-08, p. 134, original emphasis.

¹⁵⁸. «On peut alors se demander si les partisans de la 'musique à l'emporte-pièce' seraient disposés à rendre harmonieux et classiques (en les *composant*, en les adaptant aux habitudes d'ordre de notre esprit, à notre conception de la Beauté comme à la nature de nos sentiments) les rythmes nègres de *fox-trot* et de *jazz-band*. Y parviendront-ils? voudront-ils seulement le tenter?». *Ibidem*, p. 144.

From these questions emerges the idea that, for music to become classical, it must yield to «national qualities, the most purely French»¹⁵⁹. However, it must be emphasized that these qualities can exist in a great variety of styles: Koechlin was far from thinking there was only one way to be a classical French work.

Among the many remarks made in the musical press about nationalism and internationalism, the issue of French music's 'classical virtues' would be, according to Swiss composer and critic Aloÿs Fornerod, almost a curse word in a world where an «international aesthetic» ruled:

What I hate are the barbarians of genius who are the current tyrants of the concert hall, where they champion an international aesthetic, a taste for the original, the strange, the distinctive, at the expense of quality, measure, and taste, those classical virtues whose names alone can make the enemies of French music sneer¹⁶⁰.

Interestingly, it is behind the «barbarians of genius who are the current tyrants of the concert hall» who «champion [this] international aesthetic» detested by Fornerod, that Stravinsky seems to be hiding. And as it is 1928, this international aesthetic seems to be nothing more than a kind of neoclassicism initiated by the composer. In following this line of reasoning, the flaw in this new classicism appears to be not being classical enough, meaning French enough. Yet, the opposite view is also possible. Roland-Manuel 1924-06 recognized the French essence of Stravinsky's classicism and its potential for positive nationalism, for French youth to follow and perpetuate the tradition, instead of following the «makers of nightmares» (Schoenberg?) or academics¹⁶¹.

¹⁵⁹. «[...] qualités nationales, les plus purement françaises». *Ibidem*.

¹⁶⁰. «Ce que je hais, ce sont les Barbares de génie qui sont les actuels tyrans de la salle de concert, où ils font triompher une esthétique internationale, le goût de ce qui est original, étrange, caractéristique, aux dépens de la qualité, de la mesure, du goût, des vertus classiques dont le nom seul suffit parfois à faire ricaner les ennemis de la musique française». FORNEROD 1928-10, p. 586.

¹⁶¹. ROLAND-MANUEL 1924-06, 17: «'And what!' I am told, 'can your inveterate nationalism suffer to see young French musicians lumped together with the followers of a Moscow master?' It suffers so well that it dares to rejoice. At a time when the Romantic passion for originality is taking on the proportions of an epidemic, the classicism of a Stravinsky seems in its essence to be more French than the extravagance of the makers of nightmares and the sentimental chastity of the last followers of Franckism» («'Eh quoi! me dit-on, votre nationalisme invétéré peut-il souffrir de voir les jeunes musiciens français confondus parmi les caudataires d'un maître moscovite?' Il le souffre si bien qu'il ose s'en réjouir. À une époque où la passion romantique de l'originalité prend les proportions d'une épidémie, le classicisme d'un Stravinsky nous paraît en son essence plus français

II.2.2. UNIVERSAL AND POPULAR CLASSICISM

Classicism conceptualized as objective carries a universalizing potential that reaches some critics' sympathy. Lourié praised Stravinsky's success in returning to a musical language «common to all, collective», the loss of which constituted «the fundamental vice of modern music»¹⁶². But the conception of classicism as balance may also be universalizing: following Martin Stanislas Gillet's definition of 'classical music', the classical art work translates into a universal, objective language some general (not personal) emotions¹⁶³. A corollary of this universalizing potential is accessibility, namely the popularizing function of 'universal' music: «The new European style of which Stravinsky is the leading exponent is not only art in reaction against subjectivism», Andreas Liess wrote in 1933¹⁶⁴, but even more an art that offers «a universal language *within everyone's reach*»¹⁶⁵. Hoérée depicted Roussel's *Sinfonietta* as classical in the same popularizing spirit: «a more accessible means for those who have not yet understood this art, so that all audiences can grasp it»¹⁶⁶. Finally, for Robert Brussel, Ravel was a *classique français* because of

que l'extravagance des entrepreneurs de cauchemars et que la chasteté sentimentale des derniers sectateurs du frankisme».

¹⁶². «[...] commun à tous, collectif [...] le vice fondamental de la musique moderne». LOURIÉ 1927-06, p. 251.

¹⁶³. GILLET 1923-09. Gillet's view, as a Dominican theologian, presumably translates into music a broader religious conception.

¹⁶⁴. «Le nouveau style européen dont Stravinsky est le principal représentant n'est pas seulement un art en réaction contre le subjectivisme». LIESS 1933-07/08, p. 103. Stravinsky's characterization as European is taken from the chapter 'Le Russe et l'Européen' in Boris de Schloezer's 1929 book on the composer (SCHLOEZER 1929/2012). An early manifestation of this idea is found in one of his 'Réflexions sur la musique' (SCHLOEZER 1927B, p. 250): «[...] there is in fact only one great European in music today: Stravinsky, whose work, which owes so much to Russian, German, French, and Italian music, rises above all national divisions and has universal significance» («[...] il n'y a en effet aujourd'hui qu'un seul grand européen en musique: Stravinsky, dont l'œuvre, qui doit tant à la musique russe, allemande, française, italienne, s'élève au-dessus de toutes les divisions nationales et possède une signification universelle»). Later, in 1933, Schloezer would connect Handel and Stravinsky on this point: «Stravinsky, too, is uprooted; he too is a truly European musician, perhaps the only one since Handel to have renounced the national in an effort to achieve the universal» («Stravinsky, en effet, est lui aussi un déraciné; lui aussi est un musicien authentiquement européen, le seul peut-être qui depuis Händel ait renoncé dans un effort de synthèse au national pour atteindre à l'universel»). SCHLOEZER 1935/2011, p. 185.

¹⁶⁵. «[...] un langage universel à la portée de tous». LIESS 1933-07/08, 103, emphasis added.

¹⁶⁶. «[...] une manière plus accessible à ceux qui n'ont pas encore pénétré l'esprit de cet art, en sorte que tous les publics pourront le saisir». HOÉRIÉE 1935-01, p. 44.

his objectivity, his spirit of synthesis and his popularity: «It is a characteristic that brings Ravel's art even closer to classical art, to which the spectacular, resounding failures of romanticism and modern times were unknown»¹⁶⁷.

A distinction must still be made between a characterization and a judgement. Authors who characterize (neo)classicism as universalizing or popularizing attribute potential to the concept, without necessarily expressing themselves on the opportunity or not to move in such a direction in the present. Goldbeck (1935-04), for example, negatively judged the public enjoyment of the easily accessible music of some *néo-classiques*. The popularizing (since simplistic) side of this trend was contrasted with Willem Pyper's «pleasant and complicated art»¹⁶⁸. Hoérée, who praised Roussel's (neo)classicism giving his music popular success, judged as snobbery the fact that others returned to Bach to seek, among other things, popularity¹⁶⁹.

II.2.3. JUDGEMENTS

Several critics aligned themselves with two opposite, drastic positions on neoclassicism; the return to the music of the past and the invocation of a (neo)classical spirit were either seen as «the seed of the art of tomorrow» or «the sign of a definitive decadence»¹⁷⁰. According to others, it depended on how these returns were made (see TABLE 4 below). A distinction was generally made between the external imitation of the language of the past and that of its spirit. The former took the form of pastiche (either «daring» or «pure»)¹⁷¹ and was without

¹⁶⁷. «C'est un caractère par lequel l'art ravélien se rapproche encore de l'art classique, à qui étaient inconnus, d'une manière générale, les échecs spectaculaires et bruyants du romantisme et des temps modernes». BRUSSEL 1938-12, p. 224.

¹⁶⁸. «[...] l'art plaisant et compliqué». GOLDBECK 1935-04.

¹⁶⁹. HOÉRÉE 1928-12.

¹⁷⁰. «[...] le germe de l'art de demain [...] le signe d'une décadence définitive». BERTRAND 1924-06, p. 289.

¹⁷¹. DEMARQUEZ 1930-03 notes that 'neo-classicism' comes in two forms, the 'daring' pastiche (*avec du piquant*) and the 'pure' writing without spontaneity (p. 181). The same distinction can be found in GOLDBECK 1935-04. Roland-Manuel also claims that pastiche is the purest kind of classical attitude to musical composition: «[...] faced with a musical occurrence, the artist can choose between two attitudes: that of the *storyteller*, who tells his *own* story, or that of the *actor*, who *narrates*. The first is the romantic who withdraws into himself, the second is the classically-minded who observes his surroundings — and who we now find in his purest form only in pastiche» («[...] devant le fait musical, l'artiste a le choix entre deux attitudes: celle du *rhéteur*, qui *se raconte*, ou

exception judged negatively. It should be noted that this distinction mirrors the pre-War difference pointed out by Messing between *neo-classicism* (an academic attitude) and *new classicism* (including both ‘Living Classicism’ and ‘Historicism’ of TABLE 3)¹⁷². The possible confusion arising from the now indistinct use of either word probably explains the caveat formulated by Schloezer in 1926, when he warned against the assimilation of pastiche and (neo)classicism: «a Handel-style prelude and a fugue don’t make a work classical any more than the habit doesn’t make the monk»¹⁷³.

TABLE 4: ASSESSMENTS OF NEOCLASSICISM

<p><i>a) It depends on how the return to the past is made</i></p> <p>If simple imitation of the language of the past (pastiche) rather than of its spirit, neoclassicism is bad</p>
<p><i>b) Positive ('the seed of the art of tomorrow')</i></p> <p>Neoclassicism is a positive reaction to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Avant-garde experiences (<i>tabula rasa</i>, individualism) – Romanticism and/or Impressionism <p>Neoclassicism is a (historical) necessity, the natural evolution of music</p> <p>Neoclassicism is a form of renewal</p>
<p><i>c) Negative ('the sign of definitive decadence')</i></p> <p>Neoclassicism is a negative reaction, a whim, snobbery</p> <p>Neoclassicism is a dead end, a brake on evolution</p> <p>Neoclassicism is a form of academicism (sterile)</p> <p>Neoclassicism is a form of transition</p>

In contrast to the univocally negative judgement of pastiche, the appropriation of the classical spirit, judged positively, results in ‘Living Classicism’ (employment of historical forms within a living tradition), a category that by its generality everyone tends to defend and promote — like world peace. The problem is that this

celle de l’acteur, qui raconte. Le premier, c’est le romantique qui se replie sur lui-même, le second c’est le classique qui regarde autour de lui — et que nous ne retrouvons plus à l’état pur que dans le pastiche». Roland-Manuel in CHEVAILLIER/ROLAND-MANUEL 1929-05, p. 952.

¹⁷². MESSING 1996, pp. 7-17. The use of the term ‘neo-classicism’ to refer to an academic attitude in the past is still seen in the interwar period. Roland-Manuel writes, for example, that thirty years earlier Saint-Saëns «settled in away [from Franckism and Wagnernism] in the security of comfortable neo-classicism» («[...] s’installait à l’écart [du franckisme et du wagnérisme], dans la sécurité d’un néo-classicisme confortable». ROLAND-MANUEL 1921-04, p. 2.

¹⁷³. «[...] un prélude à la Haendel et une fugue ne font pas plus une œuvre classique que l’habit ne fait le moine». SCHLOEZER 1926-07, p. 66.

attitude of appropriating the classical spirit without breaking with tradition hides clearly different positions. Fulcher has described two of them, which she associates with the right and the left. On the one hand, there is the nationalist ‘orthodox model’ promoted by Charles Morras and exemplified in music by Vincent d’Indy (music rooted in a not-to-be-changed French classical model: ‘Living Classicism’ in TABLE 3). On the other hand, there is the universalist ‘revolutionary classicism’ proposed by Jacques Rivière and represented by Maurice Ravel (the meeting of rigorous discipline and lower or foreign influences, which includes the more modernist versions of ‘Living Classicism’ and ‘Historicism’-‘Evocation/Homage’ in TABLE 3)¹⁷⁴. The choice between these two positions is certainly present, but it is not absolute. Depending on whether the emphasis is placed on the ‘order’ of his music or on the fact that its materials are not chosen according to their national origin, critics and then scholars have considered Stravinsky either a universalist¹⁷⁵ (left-wing?) or a restorer (right-wing, but without the nationalist side). The division of aesthetic positions into political comparisons applies to some ideologues and can be found in party-affiliated newspapers. But in the musical press, musicographers tend to mix the ingredients in recipes that are never so clearly recognizable and explicitly political.

In continuing with this cooking perspective, composer Jean-Michel Lizotte (1891-1947) described the current state of music in 1922 with a food metaphor. Lizotte observed two existing opposite tendencies in the everlasting fight between traditional and new ideas: *art faisandé* (spoiled art: Dadaist, destructive attitude, considered by the author to be a decadent phenomenon) and *art conservé* (canned art by *faux classiques* who defend the academic copy of the classical)¹⁷⁶. Between these two opposite, negatively judged tendencies, Lizotte aspired to an *art frais* (fresh art) materializing an aesthetic of return («joining tradition without pastiche», he paraphrased Cocteau¹⁷⁷). This should not be a return either to the past (the «sick obsession» with *pastiche*) nor to the primitive (the form of *bruitisme* which generates *art faisandé*) but to such ideals as long melody, clear rhythms (*rythmes*

¹⁷⁴. FULCHER 1999A, pp. 212-213, *passim*.

¹⁷⁵. DANUSER 2004, pp. 266-267.

¹⁷⁶. LIZOTTE 1922-11, p. 315. One could recognize in the latter a harsh criticism to what Fulcher would call right-wing «orthodox model», but with no mention of its key element, nationalism: «Through feedback, they reduce everything to inaccurate, illusory values [...]. Their aim is to keep Art in a state of quasi-immobility, absolutely contrary to the laws of progress» («Ceux-ci, par une rétroaction, ramènent tout à des valeurs inexactes, illusoire[s] [...]. Leur but consiste à retenir l’Art dans une quasi-immobilité, absolument contraire aux lois du progrès»). *Ibidem*.

¹⁷⁷. LIZOTTE 1922-11, p. 316.

nets), consistency, strength, health, optimism — features that Lizotte's readers were accustomed to associating with the idea of French classicism. To prefer the past and to imitate it artificially was considered by Lizotte to be a «sad and unfortunate disease», but a true return to classical principles made it possible to «regain an enviable health» and therefore to move towards the exploration of the new¹⁷⁸. If one puts this article in context, it becomes clear that Lizotte's aim was neither properly aesthetic nor political. Lizotte was first and foremost driven by a concern for self-promotion. He was a member of an ephemeral Groupe des Trois together with Henry Sauguet (who would later enter another group, the École d'Arcueil) and Louis Émié. The group, based in Bordeaux, was likely trying to gain recognition in Paris, where Sauguet arrived in January 1922 at the invitation of Darius Milhaud, and where he frequented the Groupe des Six¹⁷⁹. Lizotte's article appeared in November, concurrently with the announcement in the capital's cultural press of the imminent founding of a new Bordeaux periodical by the three artists, *Horizons*¹⁸⁰. The fresh art he promoted was his own and his friends' music, to be published in *Horizons*, which was presented as «not a magazine, but an album forming an anthology of works of various tendencies»¹⁸¹ which — one assumes — would have in common the type of 'Living Classicism' based on a non-academic return defended by Lizotte.

The association of academism with disease and, on the other hand, the idea that a return to the past would be salutary for the future of music, can be found in places other than Lizotte's article. Roland-Manuel used the metaphor of academic classicism as a disease in 1919: «Art may well suffer from the debaucheries of the imagination and stray dangerously into the ramblings of sentiment: this is precisely the Romantic evil; but it hardly ever dies except from academicism, which is classical consumption»¹⁸². And the return to the classical spirit as a curative emerges in a text on the evolution of music by Bach's specialist Maurice Dauge: «Imitating the old Cantor [...] would be *healthy* if it were a matter of assimilating his works, drawing out their forms, acquiring a thorough knowledge of them,

¹⁷⁸. «[...] triste et fâcheuse maladie», *ibidem*, p. 315; «retrouver une enviable santé», p. 316.

¹⁷⁹. DRAKE 2001.

¹⁸⁰. See LADVOCAT 1922, and *COMEDIA* 1922.

¹⁸¹. «[...] non point une revue, mais un album formant une anthologie d'œuvres de tendances diverses». LADVOCAT 1922.

¹⁸². «Un art peut bien souffrir des débauches de l'imagination et s'égarer dangereusement dans les divagations du sentiment: c'est proprement le mal romantique; mais il ne meurt guère que de l'académisme, qui est la consommation classique». ROLAND-MANUEL 1929-05, p. 886.

and, sure of one's craft, working with solid foundations, to ignite a new spark»¹⁸³. The association between classical and health has also been put on a psychological level: «I know of at least two typical cases of patients who, when depressed, could only enjoy Schumann, but when they regained their health, they returned quite spontaneously to the great classical composers»¹⁸⁴.

The fact that judgement of (neo)classicism would be dependent on the type of return to the past is not found among all musicographers. For some, the choice between an external and a deep imitation of the pre-romantic language does not seem to exist: all return thus necessarily becomes a form of academicism, generally considered sterile and suffocating for the composer's personality: «Today», stated André Suarès, «the fugue stifles musicians' individuality, instead of being saved by what is personal and unique about it. It is merely an exercise»¹⁸⁵. Roland-Manuel, on this point, spares no one:

Artists who, like our own, have unfortunately severed the last ties that connected them to nature, will inevitably devote themselves to pastiche the minute they grow reluctant to draw on their inner resources for material for their works. This is a consequence that neither Ravel nor Stravinsky think of avoiding¹⁸⁶.

By contrast, Koechlin distinguished, as already mentioned, between classicism and academicism, refusing to define the former as the result of a simple application of rules (which necessarily leads to the latter). Consequently, he expressed strong doubts about the fact that the «call to Reason» (*l'appel à la Raison*) produced «truly classical» (*réellement classiques*) works¹⁸⁷. Koechlin did not consider the

¹⁸³. «Imiter le vieux Cantor [...] serait *salutaire* s'il s'agissait de s'assimiler ses œuvres, d'en dégager les formes, d'en acquérir une science approfondie, et, sûr de son métier, travaillant sur des bases solides, d'en faire jaillir une étincelle nouvelle». DAUGE 1931-09, p. 378, emphasis added.

¹⁸⁴. «[...] je connais au moins deux cas typiques de malades qui tous deux ne pouvaient plus goûter que Schumann durant leurs périodes de dépression, alors qu'en revenant à la santé, ils revenaient en même temps et en toute spontanéité aux grands classiques». ODIER 1924-07, p. 245.

¹⁸⁵. «Aujourd'hui, la fugue étouffe l'accent des musiciens, au lieu d'être sauvée par ce qu'il peut avoir de personnel et d'unique. Elle n'est qu'un exercice». SUARÈS 1931-05, p. 440.

¹⁸⁶. «Des artistes qui ont malheureusement brisé, comme les nôtres, les derniers liens qui les attachaient à la nature, se vouent nécessairement au pastiche dès lors qu'ils répugnent à puiser en eux-mêmes la matière de leurs ouvrages. C'est une conséquence à quoi Ravel ni Stravinsky ne songent à échapper». ROLAND-MANUEL 1929-05, p. 886. The only one who escapes the pastiche could be Roussel, as mentioned (see above fn. 65).

¹⁸⁷. KOECHLIN 1929-02, p. 63.

slogan of the return to reason against sensitivity as a call to classicism (or to Bach), but rather as a societal trend that is much more decadent than the *fin-de-siècle* it is intended to contrast:

In truth, this so-called return to Reason (badly) conceals, or openly reveals, a tendency towards coldness, a contempt for feeling which, I fear, comes not so much from a true classical spirit as from the *amoral* sense of today's society (or at least, of what we see on its surface: the rich who entertain themselves). [...] So, if [music] must be cold, mechanical, clattering, then artists (and especially aestheticians) feel the need to *legitimize this coldness* with theories against sensitivity, which will be denounced as an inferior and unhealthy element of art. [...] As if, moreover, just banishing love were enough in order to know how to build¹⁸⁸!

In line with Koechlin's last remark (it is not enough to want to build, one must know how to do it), composer and architect Albert Febvre-Longeray (1886-1942) suspected that sterile returns were not a choice but the effect of a lack of talent. As he put it provocatively, coming back should imply having already been somewhere...¹⁸⁹ The return to the past, if it is not the result of a personal journey of the artist (in the form of *influences*, intimate choices without opportunistic intentions), is only a limiting yoke resulting in a sterile imitation of a model far from the artist's sensibility¹⁹⁰. What his contemporaries had lost, the critic believed, and what they should return to was the fact of having a musical idea: «the only way to renew music is to return to it, to rediscover it. Music is only *incidentally* a style, a form, *a problem of acoustics*, a dynamic sound or rhythm; it is specifically a *sung idea*»¹⁹¹.

¹⁸⁸. «En réalité, ce prétendu retour à la Raison dissimule (mal), ou laisse voir ouvertement une tendance à la froideur, un mépris du sentiment qui, je le crains fort, ne viennent pas tant d'un véritable esprit classique que du sens *amoral* de la société actuelle (ou du moins, de ce qu'on voit à sa surface: les riches qui se divertissent). [...] Alors, si [la musique] doit être sèche, mécanique, cliquetante, les artistes (et surtout les esthéticiens) éprouvent le besoin de *légitimer cette sécheresse* par des théories contre la sensibilité, que l'on dénoncera: élément inférieur de l'art, et malsain. [...] Comme si d'ailleurs il suffisait d'avoir banni l'amour pour savoir construire!». KOECHLIN 1929-02, pp. 57-59, original emphasis.

¹⁸⁹. FEBVRE-LONGERAY 1931-04, p. 249.

¹⁹⁰. *Ibidem*. For a developed reflection on the nuances between academicism, influence and 'return to' («a kind of indirect style»), see GOLDBECK 1938-09.

¹⁹¹. «[...] le seul retour capable de renouveler la musique, c'est d'y retourner, de la retrouver. La musique, ce n'est qu'*accessoirement* un style, une forme, *un problème d'acoustique*, un dynamisme

Some musicographers raise the risk that any call to return to the past may be driven by aesthetically (and not necessarily politically) reactionary feelings:

At a time when the decadent state has done everything that could be expected, everyone is speaking willingly of a return to the classical state. At first glance, this seems to stem from sincere sentiment but, when observed carefully, it is clear that this desire to return to healthier practices is born mainly of a latent, muted hostility that rails against anything new and never relents; that beneath a captivating surface lies rejection by backward-looking, ill-informed pontiffs of a good portion of our recent advances in art. This would be, and feels like, a reaction in the least interesting sense of the word¹⁹².

Désiré Pâque's quoted worry was part of a shared concern evident in all quotes above about an interruption in the evolution of music. Going back (whatever the form of this return) would be an obstacle to historical progress, because in an evolving vision, the classical era (the eighteenth century as a whole) represented only a stage in the history of musical language: «Bach, Mozart, and Haydn wrote in this way because the harmonic evolution of their time went no further, [and it is therefore] pointless to renounce the expressive progress achieved by a Chopin or a Debussy under the pretext of classicism»¹⁹³. One of the key words of this negative view of the past is *impasse* (deadlock). On the one hand, modern music was in a deadlock and the return to the past was one of the solutions sought to overcome it¹⁹⁴. On the other hand, this continuous return led nowhere, so it was itself a deadlock: «all those who 'returned' failed

sonore ou rythmique, c'est spécifiquement une *idée chantée*». FEBVRE-LONGERAY 1931-04, p. 250, original emphasis. The nature of this musical idea seems to be melodic in Febvre-Longeray's view.

¹⁹². «En ce temps où l'état décadent a donné tout ce qu'on pouvait en attendre, chacun parle volontiers de retour à l'état classique. À première vue, cela semble partir d'un sentiment sincère, mais, si on y regarde attentivement, on s'aperçoit que ce désir de retour à de plus saines pratiques naît surtout de cette hostilité latente, sourde, qui s'acharne contre toute nouveauté et ne désarme jamais; qu'enfin sous une apparence captivante se dissimule le rejet par des pontifes attardés ou mal éclairés d'une bonne partie de nos récentes acquisitions en art. Ce serait, cela se sent, une réaction dans le sens le moins intéressant du terme». PÂQUE 1931-04, p. 345.

¹⁹³. «Bach, Mozart, Haydn écrivaient ainsi parce que l'évolution harmonique de leur époque n'allait pas plus loin, [et il est donc] inutile de renoncer aux progrès des moyens d'expression accomplis par un Chopin ou un Debussy sous le prétexte du classicisme». TANSMAN 1928-11, p. 623.

¹⁹⁴. LOURIE 1930-04, p. 354; PRUVOST 1931-02.

to realize that what they were doing was less ‘returning’ than ‘turning’ on their own axis»¹⁹⁵.

An evolutionary perspective also existed contrary to such a pessimistic stance. According to its defenders (Hoérée and Roland-Manuel especially), returning to the past would be the current stage of the natural evolution of musical language, a historical necessity — thus not a fashionable choice, the ‘snobby’ whim that was attacked many times in the columns of the journal *Musique* in 1928¹⁹⁶. Liess, as mentioned above, recognized in the style of the *objectivité nouvelle* the accomplishment of the Wagner-Debussy-Stravinsky evolution¹⁹⁷. Roger Guibert — in an attempt to establish links between ‘geniuses’ to demonstrate the fundamental unity of musical language throughout the ages — found it quite natural that his contemporaries should be inspired by Bach; Bach’s music was close to the modern era through its dynamism, its rhythmic conceptions that «can only please an era in which rhythm and strength are inseparable» and its geometric qualities provide «a kind of extra-musical pleasure quite comparable to the one we get from hearing the masterpiece *Pacific 231*»¹⁹⁸. Therefore neoclassicism, far from being confined to a form of sterile academicism, represented for some critics a form of renewal — «art [...] both very new and very courageously reactionary»¹⁹⁹. The choice (judged positively) to renew by going back was often seen as a reaction to romanticism/impressionism, but also as a healthy and progressive reaction to avant-garde experiences, to the «the delusion of independence»²⁰⁰, the *tabula rasa* giving all kinds of individualistic solutions²⁰¹.

¹⁹⁵. «[...] tous ceux qui ‘retournaient’ ne se rendaient pas compte que ce qu’ils faisaient là était moins ‘retourner’ que ‘tourner’ autour de son propre axe». LOURIÉ 1930-04, p. 354.

¹⁹⁶. HOÉRÉE 1928-07, p. 290: «There’s a new snobbery of the antique» («Il y a un nouveau snobisme de l’antique»). HOÉRÉE 1928-11, p. 627: «[...] the recent reinvention of the brilliant Cantor by a few snobs in search of original ideas» («[...] la récente réinvention du génial Cantor par quelques snobs en quête d’idées originales»). ROLAND-MANUEL 1928-12, p. 658: «For him ‘novelty is only in request’ [quotation from Shakespeare, *Measure for Measure*, III, 2] [...]. This psychology of success [...] explains snobbery — and Stravinskyian snobbery» («Pour lui ‘la nouveauté est la seule préoccupation’ [...]. Cette psychologie du succès [...] explique le snobisme — et le snobisme stravinskyste»).

¹⁹⁷. LIESS 1931-01, p. 54.

¹⁹⁸. «[...] ne peuvent que plaire à une époque tout éprise de rythme et de solidité [...] un plaisir en quelque sorte extra-musical tout à fait comparable à celui que nous donne l’audition du chef-d’œuvre qu’est *Pacific 231*». GUIBERT 1930-01, p. 54.

¹⁹⁹. «[...] un art [...] très neuf, à la fois, et très courageusement réactionnaire». HURÉ 1923-03.

²⁰⁰. «le délire de l’indépendance». DAUGE 1931-09, p. 378.

²⁰¹. SCHLOEZER 1929-02, p. 4.

II.3 EPILOGUE. TOWARDS A NON-CLASSICAL RETURN

Whether it comes from a deliberate return to the past, a natural evolution or (more rarely) a revolutionary act, the search for the new, for progress, seems to be a value shared by most musicographers in our corpus. No one praises the seeking of conservative and reassuring refuge in a classical past to escape dreadful progress. The contribution to the renewal of music is the extent to which the relevance of the different paths taken by composers of the time is assessed. Quantitatively, there is substantial parity between supporters and antagonists of the return to the past in order to achieve this goal. But the reflection on the forms of return also reveals a third way which is neither a return to the classical past nor its refusal, but rather a return to the ‘sources’ of music. In Jean Cartan’s thoughts published posthumously by *La Revue musicale*, this demand for a return to something other than the classical emerges without being better defined:

I said that I believed in a return to the ‘classical’. Don’t take this as an endorsement of the neo-classical school of certain young composers. The pastiche to which they devote themselves is still just a piece of writing. It is not the law of another era transported into our own that can satisfy us, but a law that is specific to our needs, that fights against the latest trends in music, but that emerges from them²⁰².

The return to ‘classical’ music was perhaps, suggested Louis Aubert, a period of transition: composers were looking for something that was not yet defined, and were therefore — for the moment — placing themselves under «the protective guardianship of ancestors»²⁰³. A similar opinion was expressed by Aladar de Toth (Aladár Tóth, a Hungarian musicologist), according to which at that time (1929), musicians tended to seek life in two forms of exoticism: jazz dances on the one hand, the golden classical age on the other («[the musician of today] seeks to calm his worries and his dreams of innovation in the peace of ancient classicisms»)²⁰⁴.

²⁰². «J’ai dit que je croyais à un retour vers le ‘classique’. Ne voyez pas là une approbation de l’école néo-classique de certains jeunes compositeurs. Le pastiche auquel ils s’adonnent n’est encore qu’un article de plume. Ce n’est pas la loi d’une autre époque transportée dans la nôtre qui peut nous suffire, mais une loi propre à nos besoins, qui lutte contre les tendances dernières de la musique, mais qui en sorte». CARTAN 1933-05, p. 343.

²⁰³. «[...] la protection tutélaire des ancêtres». AUBERT 1926-03, p. 18.

²⁰⁴. «[...]il] cherche à calmer son inquiétude et ses rêves novateurs dans la paix des anciens classicismes». TOTH 1929-10, p. 197.

Paradoxically, this search for life is carried out by «denying sentiment»²⁰⁵. It is a phase of latency and stagnation that can be overcome by those (few in number) who have the chance to discover «a pristine field, a new country that is the equivalent of their native land, and not an exotic world they can only exploit using art» (this is the case of Zoltán Kodály, to whom the article is devoted)²⁰⁶.

The development of similar positions in the 1930s by young composers gathered in *La Spirale* and then *La Jeune France* is well known. André Jolivet would be very receptive to this kind of discourse, which he would develop in his lectures and writings and which constituted one of the milestones of his poetics of the 1930s²⁰⁷. According to this aesthetic of an anti-neoclassical return, the source of the music that must be reached back to in order to progress was not a style or technique of composition. Rather, it was a form of musical communication based on natural resonance. To achieve this goal, contemporary composers could use means of expression already used in the past (not only Baroque and Classical), but from a perspective that was neither objectivist, nor evolutionist, nor backward-looking.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussing (neo)classicism in the French interwar musical press was a pretext to a broader, not always composer- or politics-focused reflection displaying and unceasingly redefining a series of oppositions (subjective/objective, form/content, return/progress) that critics witnessed in music trends of the period. Various viewpoints shared the pages of the same journals, were expressed through common phrases, and applied variously to a large amount of composers — Stravinsky being one of them.

The articles selected for the analysis presented in this article provide a wide range of ways in which (neo)classicism was discussed in the Parisian musical press. The phenomenon was observed, described, explained, criticized. It was variously called *retour*, *nouveau classicisme*, *néo-classicisme*, or simply *classicisme*. These terms were not always connected to a composer specifically — in particular, it appears that Stravinsky was often absent from the discussion. These terms did not share the same

²⁰⁵. «[...] reni[ant] le sentiment». *Ibidem*.

²⁰⁶. «[...] un champ vierge, un pays nouveau qui [leur] soit l'équivalent d'un pays natal, et non d'un monde exotique qu'il[s] ne pourrai[ent] exploiter qu'à force d'art». *Ibidem*, pp. 197-198.

²⁰⁷. See LAZZARO 2022.

meaning either. Two main conceptions of (neo)classicism emerge from the corpus: objectivism, developed and defended above all (but not exclusively) in relation to Stravinsky; and balance between expression and construction, a position which expresses the argument of the authors who opposed the classicism-objectivism assimilation, and suggests instead that ‘classical’ (pre-romantic) music was probably not as objective as one might maintain. Since the two conceptualizations are in opposition to each other, they lead to opposite conceptions of what a *new* classicism means and represents within the stage of music history that French critics were experiencing and to which they were seeking to give meaning. Beyond absolute promoters and detractors of any form of going back, the musicographers generally distinguish between the external imitation of the language of the past (academism, pastiche) and that of its spirit (real appropriation of ‘classical’ rules and character).

The historiographical discourse has inevitably crystallized into simplified narratives that only consider certain voices involved in the debate on the musical scene of a given period. The debate reconstituted in the present article is made up of elaborate texts that rub shoulders with fleeting statements, reflections proposed by composers or essays by musicologists, articles that have been quoted several times by musicologists and others that have been completely forgotten. The statements that have been quoted extensively do not all have the same weight, but their presence in the musical press makes them a homogeneous corpus in terms of the potential influence they could have on readers (although «of course, each critic did not read every review, nor did each one necessarily know what he was talking about»²⁰⁸). The relative success of some positions has cast a long shadow over others, to the point of obscuring them.

The systematic — although certainly not exhaustive — exploration of the musical press can provide a complementary or even renewed way of contextualizing and considering some assumptions about the interwar discourse on French ‘neoclassicism’. Bringing out the complexity of these reflections while linking them to a few more general trends allows us to see the relative importance of the words used: «Who will rid us of this spectre of ‘pure music’ and ‘objectivism’? In the end, these are just words...», wrote Prunières in 1931²⁰⁹. From this perspective, comparing current musicological conceptions of ‘neoclassicism’ (summarized in TABLE 3) to those of the period reveals the pitfalls of a ‘culturally informed music historiography’ based on the press. Reconstructing the episteme of the period plunges us into the issues that were at the heart of the music world. Yet at the

²⁰⁸. MESSING 1996, p. 82.

²⁰⁹. «Qui nous délivrera de cette hantise de la ‘musique pure’, de l’‘objectivisme’? Au fond ce ne sont que des mots...». PRUNIÈRES 1931-04.

same time, because of the militant nature of these reflections, it can prove difficult to use the concepts of the period to categorize works of the past — the critics' categories having been the result of value judgments (the notion of pastiche, used liberally to discredit a host of approaches, is revealing). Ultimately, the kind of reconstruction proposed here confirms the plural nature of the tendency to 'return to' not only in terms of works but also in terms of discourse. Everyone seemed to identify the compositional trend in question with some precision, but knowing how to define it does not seem to have been a priority among contemporaries of the period. Indeed, '(neo)classical' seems to be more a category of judgment than a label for a genre. For this reason, conceptions of (neo)classicism always go hand in hand with how they are characterized, which points to their potential roles: the universalization, nationalization, or popularization of French music. Depending on their characterization of (neo)classicism, critics express divergent positions on going down the path of a 'return to' and on conceiving composition as an artisanal assembly of a musical object.

A general consideration concerns the object of critical reflection, which focuses on the very principles of musical creation. Raymond Petit noted such a discursive tendency in 1928:

The current trend in music toward an art form described as 'pure', 'objective', and whose chief concern is not with expressing feelings, naturally goes hand in hand with a change in the way we view aesthetics. [...] Since psychological considerations cannot be its primary focus, it willingly examines the principles that govern the very existence of the work of art²¹⁰.

In other words, in Petit's eyes, anti-subjective music seemed to lead to less 'impressionistic' and more analytical criticism. This is an avenue that could be explored in a future study.

In the debate analysed, there is a surprising scarcity of political stances in journals that would otherwise be inclined to mix aesthetics and politics — especially in nationalist and 'nation-centric' terms (where all judgments about a composer must take their nationality into account)²¹¹. The key issue for commentators is to

²¹⁰. «La tendance qui porte la musique actuelle vers un art habituellement qualifié de 'pur', 'objectif', un art ne faisant pas son principal souci de l'expression des sentiments, va naturellement de pair avec un changement dans la conception que l'on se fait de l'esthétique. [...] Ne pouvant faire son principal objet de considérations psychologiques [*sic*], elle en vient à examiner volontiers les principes qui régissent l'existence même de l'œuvre d'art». PETIT 1928-06, p. 253.

²¹¹. On interwar 'nation-centrism' in Parisian musicography, see LAZZARO 2018.

determine if the neoclassical path is the right one for the present and future of music. In the words of Prunières quoted above, the risk that musicographers want to avoid is that of «unnecessarily impoverishing the sound realm»²¹².

«Stravinsky is classical», Nadia Boulanger confirmed categorically in her classes at the École normale, reported by *Le Monde musical* in 1926²¹³. The emphasis was not on the neo-ness of his works in the 1920s, but on the fact that «music would be the sole beneficiary» of his technical experimentation. Did modern music have the characteristics for becoming a model, a classic? This future-focussed thinking and the canonical value of the French contemporary repertoire — thinking that is already historiographic — is one of the main keys for understanding the debate presented here. The issue of the past and the way it is used (the neo-) is, in fact, a pretext for a debate on the potential paths to canonization of new classics.

APPENDIX: CORPUS

The following articles formed the corpus studied for this article. They are all accessible online, in the corpus '(Neo)classicisme' of the database *Presse et musique en France XIX^e-XX^e siècles* (<<https://pmf.oicrm.org>>).

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²¹². «[...] appauvrir bien inutilement le royaume sonore». PRUNIÈRES 1931-04.

²¹³. BOULANGER 1926-06, p. 243.

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