

A Swiss Homage to Andrés Segovia – Gitarrenmusik in der Schweiz

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Introduction

The end of a century is an appropriate time to gain insights into and take inventory of historical events and cultural heritages. In the field of music, anthologies concerning the twentieth century, which is approaching its end, appear only sporadically; listeners seem to be still preoccupied with the time preceding it.

In part, the problems involved with the music of this century are the same as with the music of earlier periods. If it has not yet been published, one has to consult libraries. It is often difficult to make a selection amongst the abundance of material. In this regard, the body of music of the twentieth century, to a great extent, has yet to be discovered -- even if it has been published, decades often pass before musicians decide to perform it and musicologists are found who put it in its proper historical perspective.

The special case of musical development in Switzerland is notable for certain factors which stand (or stood) in the way of the more widespread acceptance of Swiss music internationally. Switzerland, as a nation, does not represent one single body of culture. Therefore, there is a certain lack of cultural identity perceived by other nations. Being surrounded by cultural giants, Swiss culture possibly does not stand out enough; its image is absorbed to a certain extent by that of the surrounding countries. Additionally, Switzerland isolated itself politically, and therefore culturally, in the first half of this century. That is one of the reasons why Frank Martin left the country shortly after the second World War.¹⁾ But the present recording easily shows that the standard of musical endeavor in Switzerland is quite comparable to that of its neighbors.

Segovia and Switzerland

Andrés Segovia's importance for the guitar music of this century is commonly known. A true cosmopolitan, Segovia lived in many countries -- besides Spain, he also lived in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, New York, and for a short time in Paris. Also, he lived from 1930 to 1935 in Geneva.²⁾ He even offered Henri Gagnebin, then director of the Geneva Conservatory, the possibility of his taking on a guitar class there, a project which never materialized.³⁾ It is perhaps less well known that after moving away from New York in 1964, he settled in Geneva again where he resided permanently until his death in 1987. He did give a master class at the Geneva Conservatory in 1981.

Wherever he went, Segovia always inspired composers through his powerful guitar playing and personality to write for the instrument. In regards to Geneva, it was first and foremost Frank Martin who wrote his *Quatre Pièces Brèves* out of enthusiasm for Segovia's playing. After the war, he also inspired Hans Haug to write pieces for the guitar. Henri Gagnebin dedicated his *Trois Pièces* to him. Gagnebin and Segovia developed a close relationship, and it was Segovia who suggested that Gagnebin -- then president of the Geneva International Music Competition -- admit the guitar as a competition instrument for the first time in 1956,⁴⁾ two years before the O.R.T.F. competitions in Paris.

This first guitar competition in history turned out to be a summit meeting of some of that generation's most prominent composers and guitarists. In addition to Andrés Segovia and Henri Gagnebin, there were also Hans Haug, Hermann Leeb, José de Azpiazu, Luise Walker and Alexandre Tansman (see photo). The repertoire for the competition was demanding. Among the required pieces were *Chansons* from Gagnebin's set and the guitar concerto of Swiss composer Pierre Wissmer.⁵⁾

Luise Walker remembers hearing a 15-year-old boy by the name of John Williams take part in the competition.⁶⁾ The winner, however, was Manuel Cubedo.

Frank Martin (1890 - 1974)

Quatre pièces brèves (1933)

In 1993, an article by Jan J. de Kloe about the *Quatre pièces brèves* appeared in the American guitar magazine *Soundboard*, published by the Guitar Foundation of America, which was deemed by Maria Martin (Frank Martin's widow) to be the most comprehensive study ever to appear about these works.⁷⁾ I would like to summarize a few excerpts from this article and elaborate a bit on them.

The *Quatre pièces brèves*, composed in 1933, are Frank Martin's only solo composition for guitar, an instrument which he did include in some chamber music works: *Quant n'ont assez fait do-do* (1947) for tenor, guitar and piano duet; *Drey Minnelieder* (1960) for soprano and piano (later arranged for flute and guitar by Martin himself); and *Poèmes de la mort* (1971) for three male voices and three electric guitars.

Both Andrés Segovia and Frank Martin were living in Geneva in 1933. It is uncertain whether Segovia asked Martin to write something for him, or if the initiative for the *Quatre pièces brèves* came from Martin himself. At any rate, Martin did receive some music by Castelnuovo-Tedesco from Segovia in order to show him how to write for the guitar. But Martin did not write according to any set patterns. He used the guitar as an aid in composing. First, he wrote out a manuscript in pencil which he used as a rough draft in composing different versions. He sent Segovia a copy right away, but Segovia never responded. Upon a chance meeting in the rue de la Corratarie, Segovia merely uttered a terse "au revoir."¹¹ Martin was perplexed by Segovia's indifference and was afraid that his pieces might be unplayable. The same year, Martin wrote an arrangement of them for piano with the title: *GUI-TARE -- Suite pour le piano (portrait d'Andrés Segovia, été 1933)*. And Martin's friend, the conductor Ernest Ansermet, convinced him to write a version for orchestra which was premiered in 1934.

However, Martin always had the original guitar version in the back of his head. He composed a revised version of the *Quatre pièces brèves* in 1938 for the Zurich guitarist Hermann Leeb who also performed it. This motivated Segovia in turn to ask Martin for a new copy of the work, having lost his first one. Martin refused, disappointed as he was in Segovia. Therefore, we have no means of comparing the original pencil rough draft with the version he gave to Segovia. Leeb's version is kept in the collection of the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel.

In 1950, José de Azpiazu was appointed to a teaching position at the Geneva Conservatory on the strength of Segovia's recommendation.⁸⁾ Frank Martin sent yet another manuscript copy of his *Quatre pièces brèves* in 1951 to Jean-Marc Pasche, director of the music office at Radio Genève (now called Radio Suisse Romande), requesting him to give this new version to José de Azpiazu who was to make a recording of it. In June of 1951, Azpiazu arranged his own version of Martin's piece which he recorded on July 30 of the same year.⁸⁾ He returned Martin's handwritten manuscript to Radio Genève, but it got lost later on. Then Azpiazu made a copy of his version of the *Quatre pièces brèves*, and this was the copy eventually returned to Frank Martin.

Still another version of the pieces was prepared for publication by Martin in 1955. Azpiazu was turned down in favor of Karl Scheit as editor of the *Quatre pièces brèves* eventually published by Universal Edition in 1959. Anyone who knows the UE edition and compares it with Leeb's version would probably think that Scheit was responsible for its many textual deviations. However, this is not the case, for Azpiazu's version of 1951 is almost identical to Martin's last manuscript which he sent to Universal Edition in 1955.

Soon after its publication, Julian Bream performed the *Quatre pièces brèves* in his concerts.¹⁾ Martin was in the audience at some of these in Amsterdam. It was Bream who made the first LP recordings of the *Quatre pièces brèves*, later considered by many professionals to be among the most important works for guitar composed in the years between the world wars. Later, Bream tried to get Martin to compose another solo work for guitar. His recollections of that time:

"Of course, I can see now, looking back, that I never collared some of the finest composers early enough. A composer I much admire is the Swiss composer Frank Martin. I even went round and spent some time with him at his house near Amsterdam. Eventually, I plucked up enough courage to commission a piece, and he was most eager to do it. But he was already eighty or thereabouts, which is leaving it a bit late in the day. Not long after, he came to a recital I was giving in Lucerne. It was a morning concert [see photograph], and afterwards we took a stroll down by the lake to discuss the new piece, he in French and myself in English. Yet we understood each other perfectly. That was the last time I saw him. He died a few months later."⁹⁾

Henri Gagnebin (1886 - 1977)

Trois pièces à Andrés Segovia (1953)

Henri Gagnebin was born in Liège, Belgium in 1886 as the son of a Swiss pastor from the Bernese Jura and of a Dutch mother. The family moved back to Switzerland in 1892. Gagnebin studied organ, composition, and orchestration; his teachers included, among others, Vincent d'Indy and Joseph Lauber (who later taught Frank Martin as well). Gagnebin was director of the Geneva Conservatory from 1925 to 1957. His catalogue of works includes four symphonies, oratorios, organ and piano works, and string quartets, among others. In addition to the *Trois pièces à Andrés Segovia*, there is a piece entitled *Eglogue* for clarinet (or violin) and guitar.¹⁰⁾

Gagnebin had an important circle of friends which he built during his years as director of the Geneva Conservatory. Foremost among these was Frank Martin, whom he admired greatly and with whom he enjoyed an especially close friendship. They met once a week over a long period of time, and between 1939 and 1944, they even lived in the same building at 16 Cours des Bastions: Martin on the fifth and Gagnebin on the second floor.

Other musical personalities, such as Mstislav Rostropovich, Arthur Rubinstein, Ernest Ansermet, and Andrés Segovia, also belonged to this circle. Many of Gagnebin's contemporaries describe him as a man with a great sense of humor. After a concert in Geneva where Segovia gave a uniquely inspired performance of Bach's D minor

Chaconne, Gagnebin made a pun on the French expression: "Chacun sa chacune," turning it into: "Chacun sa Chaconne."¹¹⁾

Henri Gagnebin, who did not play the guitar himself, composed his *Trois pièces* in March, 1953. They were written to a large extent in collaboration with José de Azpiázu, who had them published the same year, with slight changes in the text, by Symphonia-Verlag in Basel under the title: *Trois pièces pour guitare à Andrés Segovia*. We can presume that Segovia received a copy of the *Trois pièces*, being dedicated to him, shortly after they appeared in print. He wrote the following in a letter from New York on February 22, 1954:

"Maître Henri Gagnebin. Cher Maître (Dear Maestro): I am sending you these lines to let you know that I am slowly progressing in my work with your beautiful compositions. Slowly, but decisively. I believe that I can include them in my programs for the next season. (...) I intend to come to Switzerland early next summer before heading on to Granada. I shall inform you in advance of my time of arrival so that I can play your pieces for you and get your approval. If I can get them up properly before then, I shall send you a tape recording of them."¹²⁾

In his letter from Assisi on September 19, 1954 he writes:

"Mon cher maître (My dear Maestro): I am going to play a piece from your beautiful suite, the *Chansons*, in Geneva -- unfortunately, I was not yet able to master the entire set. I don't know whether you approve of the idea of playing the *Chansons* separately from the rest of the work; normally I wouldn't, but I do want to play something of yours. If you do not approve, please tell Madame Giovanna Casseti to whom I am mailing my program at the same time as this letter. (...) I shall probably arrive in Geneva on the 28th and shall notify you at once so you can hear your piece. It sounds very good on the guitar."¹²⁾

On October 12, 1954, Segovia played the *Chansons* by Henri Gagnebin at his concert in the Théâtre de la Cour St. Pierre in Geneva.¹³⁾

Segovia wrote again while on tour in the USA -- here is part of his letter dated January 17, 1957: "Mon très cher Maestro et ami (My very dear Maestro and friend): (...) I am presently about to remake an older recording of mine, this time with some new material. Your *Chansons* will be on it. This attractive piece will fit in quite nicely and I hope you will enjoy the results. As soon as the record is issued, I shall send you one or two copies."¹²⁾

Chansons was one of the required pieces at the 1956 Geneva competition.⁵⁾ Reading the brochure announcing the competition, Karl Scheit noticed that Gagnebin had written something for the guitar. He wrote to Gagnebin on March 10, 1956 from Vienna:

"(...) I am editing a series called *Music for the Guitar* for Universal Edition and am including some contemporary music as well. A piece by Frank Martin will soon be published. Now I would like to ask if you would be interested in submitting one of your guitar compositions for publication in this series? Besides, I want to take this opportunity to express my thanks to you for your efforts on behalf of the guitar and especially for admitting this instrument category to the Geneva competition. With best regards, yours truly, Karl Scheit."

As far as I could ascertain, Segovia's recording was never issued.^{2, 11, 14)} Gagnebin's reaction to Scheit's letter, if there was any, also remains unknown. It is certain, though, that Scheit never published any piece by Gagnebin.¹⁵⁾ According to his catalogue of works, there are no more pieces written for guitar except for *Eglogue* (written for M. G. Bauer in 1965 and scored for clarinet and guitar).¹⁰⁾

After the 1956 competition was over, Gagnebin's guitar pieces were gradually forgotten. After Segovia apparently never fulfilled his intention to record *Chansons* from the *Trois pièces*, here is now the premiere recording of the complete cycle.

Hans Haug (1900 - 1967)

Prélude, Tiento et Toccata (September 26-28, 1961)

Hans Haug was born in Basel on July 27, 1900. He studied piano and 'cello at the Basel Conservatory and participated in master classes given by Ferruccio Busoni in Zurich, later studying composition and conducting at the Music Academy in Munich. Haug conducted several different Swiss radio symphony orchestras. From 1947 to 1960, he taught harmony and counterpoint at the Lausanne Conservatory.

Haug's catalogue of works is immense and includes string quartets, various chamber works, vocal music, concertos, symphonic works, operas, oratorios, and film music in addition to his compositions for, or including, the guitar.¹⁶⁾

In December, 1950, the "Accademia Musicale Chigiana" in Siena, Italy held a composition competition for guitar in the following combinations:

1. Concertino for Guitar and Chamber Orchestra;
2. Quintet for Guitar and String Quartet;
3. Guitar Solo (Sonata, Suite or Fantasy).

Twenty-five works were submitted. President of the jury was George Enescu; among the other members were Ricardo Brengola, Gaspar Cassadó, and Andrés Segovia. The prizes awarded in August, 1951 did not recognize

any of the guitar quintets; Alexandre Tansman's Cavatina for guitar solo and Hans Haug's Concertino for Guitar and Chamber Orchestra both received prizes. It was Haug's first guitar composition.¹⁷⁾

The prizewinners were promised that Segovia would premiere their pieces in the summer of 1952 and that they would be published afterwards by Schott of London. Whereas this promise was kept in the case of Tansman's Cavatina (Schott published it in 1952), Segovia never played Haug's Concertino,^{2, 18)} which had to await publication until three years after Haug's death in 1970. It appeared in a facsimile edition under the auspices of Edizioni musicali Bèrben. Alexandre Lagoya and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra played its world premiere.

Encouraged by his prize in the Siena competition, Haug continued to explore the guitar. He took guitar lessons on a regular basis with José de Azpiazu from October 28, 1953 to January 27, 1954 in order to learn more about the instrument.¹⁹⁾ His first composition for solo guitar, Alba, and possibly his Preludio as well (which Segovia later called "Postlude"), were written around this time. Apparently, Alba was in Segovia's possession shortly thereafter; in a letter from Assisi dated September 19, 1954, he apologizes to Gagnebin for having studied only one work of his: "Please be aware that I am also behind in my work on the other pieces by Villa-Lobos, Tansman, Haug, Rodrigo, Torroba, Castelnuovo, etc. You will not see any premieres at all on the programs of my next concerts (...)."¹²⁾ Later, Segovia did record Alba and Postlude on the record: Andrés Segovia with the Strings of the Quintetto Chigiana (Decca DL 9832). This was Segovia's only recording of any of Haug's works.¹⁴⁾

In 1961, Segovia asked Haug to teach some composition courses at the summer music academy in Santiago de Compostella,¹⁸⁾ and it was here that Haug completed his Prélude, Tiento et Toccata on September 28, 1961. No correspondence between Haug and Segovia is known to exist since they communicated mostly by telephone.¹⁸⁾

Haug's Work With Other Guitarists

Hans Haug became acquainted with Luise Walker at the Geneva Competition in 1956.⁶⁾ As a result of this meeting, he wrote his Fantasia for Guitar and Piano in 1957 which he dedicated to her. In 1963, his Capriccio pour flûte et guitare was written for the duo Werner Tripp and Konrad Ragossnig (released on RCA Victor 440.182: "L'Anthologie de la guitare"). Also, Haug composed a Concerto pour flûte, guitare et orchestre in 1966, and he used the guitar in the following works as well: Variations on a Theme of Jacques Offenbach (for orchestra), Don Juan à l'étranger (comic opera), Les Fous (comic opera), Justice du roi (tragicomedy) and Tag ohne Ende ("Day Without End", film music).

Ernst Widmer (1927 - 1990)

Fünf Stücke für Gitarre

Ernst Widmer was born in Aarau, Switzerland in 1927. He studied composition with Willy Burkhard at the Zurich Conservatory. Later, Widmer left Switzerland to settle in Brazil. Here, he was mainly responsible for the creation and development of the Music Academy of the University of Bahia where he taught composition and piano, later becoming its director. With the foundation of the "Gruppo de Compositores da Bahia" in 1966, Widmer elevated the Music Academy of the University of Bahia to an important center for Brazilian contemporary music. A large part of Widmer's works are dedicated to the voice: he wrote Lieder cycles and forty a capella choral works.²⁰⁾ Ernst Widmer died in Aarau on January 3, 1990. His musical legacy is kept by the Ernst Widmer Society which is preparing a catalogue of his works at present.

I wrote to Ernst Widmer at his address in Salvador Bahia in the summer of 1988 proposing a commission to write a guitar work. His answer came on September 11, 1988: "(...) I would be glad to write something for guitar, I'm very flexible in such matters. Please decide yourself: what would go over the best? Are there any neglected areas? I'll be visiting my brother in Switzerland from November 1 until December 15." I visited Ernst Widmer in Aarau in November, 1988. We discussed the commission. He played some of his piano pieces for me, and I played some contemporary guitar works for him. To me, Widmer seemed to know the guitar very well, indeed; he had written his earlier guitar compositions in Bahia in collaboration with one of the guitarists at the local music academy. Widmer showed me one of his orchestral compositions which has an important guitar part. I listened to a tape recording of a performance of the piece with an extensive cadenza for the guitar. Additionally, Widmer wrote other works for and with the guitar.

On August 23, 1989, I received a letter from Bahia. Widmer wrote: "I should be able to fulfil the contract by the end of this year." It was the last letter I ever received from him. He died about four months later.

In March, 1990, a folder with guitar compositions, which had my calling card attached to it, turned up at the Ernst Widmer Society in Aarau. Widmer had worked on these up to the very end. Only the Con brio was written in clean copy on a separate sheet. The order of the pieces in the folder, although without page numbering, is as follows: Calmo, Vivo (it is not absolutely sure that the second part of the Vivo belongs here. It was written separately on the next sheet, although there would have been space for it on the previous one), Ronde, and Barcarolle.

Han Jonkers

(English translation by Jonathan Blair)

Appendix

The commentary to this CD would have been impossible to write without the invaluable help of the following persons, articles, and books:

- 1) Conversation with Maria Martin-Boeke (Naarden, Holland)
- 2) Conversation with Emilita Segovia (Geneva)
- 3) Bulletin du Conservatoire de Musique de Genève, Nov. 1950
- 4) Gitarre & Laute, No. 2, 1986
- 5) Brochure of the 1956 Geneva International Music Competition
- 6) Conversation with Luise Walker (Vienna)
- 7) Jan J. de Kloe: "Martin's 'Quatre pièces brèves'" in Soundboard (journal of the Guitar Foundation of America, 1993)
- 8) Conversation with María Guadalupe Azpiazu (Geneva)
- 9) Tony Palmer: "Julian Bream, A Life on the Road" (Macdonald & Co., London, 1982, p. 92)
- 10) Descendants of Henri Gagnebin: "Henri Gagnebin -- Chronologie de sa vie et Catalogue de ses oeuvres" (Le Larigot, Anières, 1986)
- 11) Conversations with François and Charles Gagnebin, Anières / Cormondrèche (Switzerland)
- 12) recently discovered letters of Segovia's and Scheit's, published in excerpts here for the first time
- 13) program leaflet of a Geneva concert of Segovia's in 1954
- 14) Graham Wade: "Segovia: A Celebration of the Man and his Music" (Allison & Busby, London, 1983)
- 15) publisher's catalogue: "Musik für Gitarre von Karl Scheit", Universal Edition (Vienna)
- 16) Jean-Louis Olivier Matthey: "Hans Haug -- Catalogue du fonds déposé à la Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire de Lausanne", Lausanne, 1970
- 17) "Guitar Review", No. 13, 1952
- 18) personal correspondence between Françoise Haug-Budry (Montréal, Canada) and myself
- 19) Agenda of José de Azpiazu, supplied by María Guadalupe Azpiazu
- 20) Sibylle Erismann: "Klima und Eingängigkeit sind mir wichtig" (article about the compositions of Ernst Widmer in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" of May 23-24, 1992)

The Photographs were supplied by the following persons:

- Competition jury: Françoise Haug-Budry
- Frank Martin with Julian Bream: Maria Martin-Boeke
- Henri Gagnebin: François Gagnebin
- Hans Haug: Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire de Lausanne
- Ernst Widmer: Ernst Widmer Society, Aarau

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