

MARCO POLO

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MARCO POLO FILM MUSIC CLASSICS

**Arthur
Honegger**
Les Misérables
(Complete Film Score)

Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra (Bratislava)
Adriano





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Arthur Honegger (1892 - 1955)

Les Misérables (Complete Film Score, 1934)

Arthur Honegger, one of the greatest of twentieth century composers, made an unrivalled contribution to film music during the course of some thirty years, from his scores for Abel Gance's *La Roue* in 1922 and *Napoléon* in 1926, music that he regarded as his apprentice work, to his last work of this kind in 1951, a total production of some forty film scores. Half of these were written and orchestrated by the composer himself, and the rest in collaboration with Arthur Hoérée, André Jolivet, Maurice Jaubert, Darius Milhaud, Roland-Manuel and Maurice Thiriet, this largely through pressure of time. Nevertheless Honegger's music for films is a considerable achievement for a composer of such importance. Some of his film scores like *Mermoz* and *Regain* were arranged by the composer for concert use.

Honegger, himself a film enthusiast often to be seen on the set during shooting, reveals astonishingly advanced ideas on the function of music in the cinema, his pre-eminence in the field recognised already in 1936 by Kurt London who described him as the true leader of modern film music in France. He regarded the ideal film score as a distinct component in a unified medium, despising clumsy attempts at cartoon synchronization with movement on the screen and looking forward to films that might not so much be supplied with music as inspired by it.

In Honegger's opinion, cinematic montage differs from musical composition in that, while the latter depends on continuity and logical development, the film relies on contrasts. Music and sound must, therefore, adapt themselves to strengthening and complementing the visual element, while the whole must be an artistic unity, in which the generally visual imagination of the public may be assisted to a greater understanding of the musical message.

Before its recent appearance in the guise of a musical, Victor Hugo's popular novel had been frequently adapted for the screen. The 1960 version, with Jean Gabin as Jean Valjean, and a much more recent version with Lino Ventura in the same rôle, are more memorable for the impressive acting of their stars than for their cinematic attributes. It is, however, Raymond Bernard's black and white version of 1934 which, with its greater lyricism, its rendering of the conflicts and passions and its highly artistic thematic language, creates a more powerful atmosphere. Besides this, Harry Baur's impersonation of Jean Valjean remains absolutely unforgettable. These qualities are so heightened by Honegger's score that we are driven to conclude that this was far more than a mere financial project on the composer's part: in writing the music for this three-part epic (about 90 minutes each part), Honegger created a masterwork. Bernard later edited his film into a one-evening feature, so that some important musical cues suffered severe cuts, while others disappeared altogether, but fortunately the complete version has lately been made available again. This major score was composed in 1934, a fruitful year in Honegger's film music career, which saw the production of *Rapt*, *L'Idée*, *Cessez le feu* and *Crime et châtement*, and, surprisingly enough, no other works from the "classical" genre.

It was Charles Koechlin who considered *Les Misérables* "undoubtedly one of the best film scores hitherto created", while in Miklós Rózsa's autobiography *A Double Life*, we read that Rózsa was so deeply impressed that he urged Honegger to make a suite out of the music. "It was as good as anything he had written, and was worthy to stand on its own... It was dramatic and lyrical, and so much in his individual style that you would have known who the composer was even without seeing his name in the titles". Eventually, Honegger followed Rózsa's advice and arranged five movements from *Les Misérables* into a suite.

It was while studying and preparing his first recording of Honegger's film music (containing, among others, the suite from *Les Misérables*) that the present writer took up again the complete manuscript of *Les Misérables* with

which he had been acquainted since 1983. Although the idea of proposing this work for a complete recording seemed unrealistic to him, the producer accepted its inclusion in the projected series of MARCO POLO FILM MUSIC CLASSICS. There is actually no other complete classic French film score on record yet, apart from an exclusive Honegger recording of Suites from his film scores and one just wonders why nobody has bothered to do this before.

Honegger's autograph is subdivided into 23 cues, and is scored for a symphony orchestra including saxophone, piano, harp and percussion, and interestingly, omitting double basses throughout. Considering the length of the original picture, approximately one hour of incidental music is very little in comparison and especially in the second part, some extremely long sections could have been enriched by Honegger's music.

The present performing version of 17 cues omits three dance pieces (not by Honegger), a short "source" prelude for organ, a few introductory bars of no real interest, a theme quotation which has also been crossed out in the manuscript, and finally Gavroche's short death scene (requiring a singing voice accompanied by a few instruments). This recording can be considered as complete since it also restores music which was not used in the film (such as the Cosette et Marius episode), shortened, or prematurely faded out for editing reasons.

Another aspect of this version is the linking together of various short pieces in order to create movements of greater impact or symphonic unity. Fantine, for example, with its livelier middle section, is a combination of three different short cues from the same episode. L'assaut and Solitude also required similar editorial work. Of course, script chronology, thematic or harmonic relation between the edited sections, or the possibility of creating musical contrasts with respect to the original intentions were the preconditions. In other cases, some recurrent repetitions have been ignored, or used in a slightly varied orchestration (as, for example in the opening section of Mort d'Eponine and Le Luxembourg). Retouches in the instrumentation were inevitable in the

whole "folk" section of *La foire à Montfermeil* (actually a "source" piece heard always in the background), where its piano part has been arranged for accordion and its rather clumsy percussion section completely rewritten. In *L'assaut*, the insertion of an explosion effect for percussion instruments and an extra part for military drums was found appropriate, in order to restore the dramatic atmosphere on the screen, combined with the original "live" sound. Other instrumental retouches concern the doublings of wind parts, since, following the rather primitive acoustic possibilities of the equipment of the time, they were used as soli practically throughout, though still well-balanced against a considerably smaller string ensemble than the one used in this recording. It was found more appropriate to adhere to the tempi used by the unforgettable Maurice Jaubert (the conductor of the original soundtrack of *Les Misérables*), rather than to the often slower metronome indications in the autograph.

The only missing piece in Honegger's manuscript was a movement, entitled by the present writer *Le convoi nocturne*, which had to be actually important and one amongst the very few cues, where complete orchestral forces are involved, besides the *Générique*, *Dans les égouts* and *L'émeute*. This had to be reconstructed and re-orchestrated directly from the soundtrack. The remaining pieces are conceived rather on a "chamber" basis and furnish altogether a perfect example of Honegger's transparent contrapuntal artistry and sense of orchestration.

Although not a great lover of leitmotifs, Honegger uses three, unvaried, major themes in his score. The first is a descending, resigned march motif related to the convicts, recurring mainly in the *Générique* and *Le convoi nocturne*. Immediately afterwards, in these two movements, there is an ascending motif we can identify with Jean Valjean's love and generosity. It recurs quite often in the score and is finally quoted in a transfigured guise in the last scene of the film (*Mort de Jean Valjean*). Honegger uses also the "convict" motif, however, in the revolutionary piece *L'émeute*, which makes us understand that, like Victor Hugo in his novel, he felt pity for all kinds of

"miserable" and oppressed people. This exciting movement, which Honegger included in an arranged form to his suite, was originally conceived as a main title of the third part of the film. A rather buoyant "love" motif appears for the first time in *Cosette et Marius* the projected main title to the second part, before it was decided that the *Générique* should be used in all three parts.

One of the most powerful movements is without doubt *Dans les égouts*, where Honegger uses musical cells and dispenses with a real theme, except in the climax, where Jean Valjean's "love" motif rises dramatically from the trombones amongst the orchestral tutti. Honegger also displays a curious experimental aspect in *La foire à Montfermeil*, where the reprise of the "source" folk music piece has superimposed "psychological" glissandi from trombones, tremoli, glissandi and col legno effects from the strings supported by the percussion. They illustrate little Cosette's frightful nocturnal experience in the woods, before meeting Jean Valjean for the first time. *Une tempête sous un crâne* is another movement of value and particularly dramatic in its impact: it emphasizes a longer "conscience struggle" monologue by Jean Valjean.

As was done in the first recording of the *Suite from Les Misérables*, the charming *Musique chez Gillenormand* was played again by a reduced ensemble of eight strings, six wind instruments, harp and piano, in order to recreate the chamber effect as it would have been in the film, although actually there it is badly edited, abridged and almost inaudible.

With this complete recording of a master film score from the Thirties, one can only hope that interest in this genre will be more seriously extended to other classic European film composers as well. There have been splendid re-recorded editions of great Hollywood film scores, and, incidentally, still not enough of the good ones, but I suppose that there are quite a few composers from Hollywood, who would have turned pale at hearing what was done in Europe at the same time in a field where they considered themselves the masters. Those European masters, incidentally, also provided their own excellent orchestrations.

Adriano

Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra (Bratislava)

The Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra (Bratislava), the oldest symphonic ensemble in Slovakia, was founded in 1929 at the instance of Milos Ruppeldt and Oskar Nedbal, prominent personalities in the sphere of music. The orchestra was first conducted by the Prague conductor František Dyk and in the course of the past fifty years of its existence has worked under the batons of several prominent Czech and Slovak conductors. Ondrej Lenárd was appointed its conductor in 1970 and in 1977 its conductor-in-chief.

Adriano

Swiss-born Adriano began his artistic activities in the domains of the theatre and the graphic arts. In music he was largely self-taught. When he was in his twenties, he was urged by conductors such as Joseph Keilberth and Ernest Ansermet, who recognized his gifts, to embrace a conducting career. Instead he became a composer of stage, film and chamber music and also a record-producer for his own gramophone label, Adriano Records. In the late 1970s he established himself as a specialist on Ottorino Respighi, organizing a comprehensive exhibition and publishing a discography. He has also orchestrated a song-cycle by Respighi. For the past six years Adriano has worked as an Italian and French coach, teacher and state assistant at the Zürich Opera House and its International Opera Studio. His numerous efforts to promote little known music include an Old Italian translation of Telemann's opera Pimpinone, which was premiered in Italy in 1987. For a production of Galuppi's *Il filosofo di campagna* at the Stuttgart Music Festival in 1988, Adriano conceived a theatrical prologue in which he himself appeared as an actor.

Adriano is now a regular guest of the Radio Bratislava Symphony Orchestra, mainly contributing to a classic film music series for Marco Polo Records, in which it is planned to include recordings of more than a dozen scores. Many

of them were rediscovered, edited or reconstructed by Adriano. His first album of film music suites by Arthur Honegger met with an enthusiastic reception by the international press.

(from a note by David Nelson)



Adriano
(Photo by Fero Horvat, Bratislava)

Illustrations on page 2

1. Jean Valjean (Harry Baur) and Javert (Charles Vanel) in the barricade-fighting scene. (Cinémathèque Française, Paris)
2. The agonising Jean Valjean surrounded by his beloved Cosette (Josseline Gael) and Marius (Jean Servais) (Cinémathèque Suisse, Lausanne)
3. The sewer's scene (Cinémathèque Française, Paris)
4. From left to right: Raymond Bernard, Arthur Honegger and Maurice Jaubert at recording sessions of the soundtrack of "Les Misérables" (Cinémathèque Française, Paris)

Arthur Honegger, l'un des plus grands compositeurs du vingtième siècle, a, dans l'espace d'une trentaine d'années, apporté une contribution sans précédent à la musique de film. De ses premières compositions, à savoir les films d'Abel Gance *La roue* en 1922 et *Napoléon* en 1926 dans lesquels il voit du travail de débutant, à sa dernière oeuvre en 1951, on compte une production totale d'une quarantaine de compositions musicales pour films. La moitié de son oeuvre est écrite et orchestrée par le compositeur lui-même, le reste l'étant en collaboration avec son ami Arthur Hoérée, qui meurt en 1986 avant d'avoir entendu l'enregistrement actuel avec André Jolivet, Maurice Jaubert, Darius Milhaud, Roland-Manuel et Maurice Thiret, le tout réalisé sous la pression du temps. Quoi qu'il en soit, la musique cinématographique d'Honegger représente une oeuvre considérable pour un compositeur d'une telle importance. Il arrangera l'orchestration de quelques un de ses films comme *Mermoz* et *Regain*.

Honegger, lui-même grand amateur de cinéma, assiste souvent au tournage, et se fait remarquer par ses idées étonnamment modernes sur la fonction musicale dans le cinéma. Kurt London en 1936, déjà, reconnaît en lui sa prééminence dans ce domaine et le décrit comme le vrai leader de la musique cinématographique moderne en France.

Honegger considère que la composition musicale idéale pour film doit faire de la musique un composant distinct dans un ensemble uni; il méprise les essais maladroits du dessin animé dans l'utilisation du procédé de synchronisation au mouvement sur l'écran, et attend impatiemment les films qui ne sont pas seulement des produits fournis avec la musique mais qui savent aussi s'en inspirer.

Selon Honegger, le montage cinématographique diffère de la composition musicale en ce que cette dernière dépend d'un mouvement continu et logique, et que le film repose sur des contrastes. Musique et son doivent donc s'adapter l'un à l'autre dans le but de renforcer et compléter l'élément visuel; le tout doit alors présenter une unité artistique qui permette à l'imagination visuelle commune du public de s'enrichir d'une meilleure compréhension du langage musical.

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Playing
Time :
58'55"

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------|---|--------|
| 1 Générique | (3:41) | 10 Le jardin de la rue Plumet -
Le convoi nocturne
(orch. Adriano) | (5:12) |
| 2 Jean Valjean sur la route | (3:47) | 11 L'Emeute | (2:46) |
| 3 Evocation des forcats | (1:55) | 12 Mort d'Eponine | (2:18) |
| 4 Une tempête sous un crâne | (6:43) | 13 L'Assaut | (2:15) |
| 5 Fantine | (4:11) | 14 Dans les égouts | (5:39) |
| 6 Fuite de Jean Valjean | (1:01) | 15 Musique chez Gillenormand | (1:55) |
| 7 Cosette et Marius | (2:09) | 16 Solitude | (1:39) |
| 8 La foire à Montfermeil | (7:39) | 17 Mort de Jean Valjean | (2:47) |
| 9 Le Luxembourg | (2:32) | | |

Recorded at the Concert Hall of the Czecho-Slovak
Radio in Bratislava from 2nd to 5th July, 1989.

Producer: Martin Sauer

Music Notes: Adriano

original orchestral material to the Suite from "Les
Misérables" was used in a few movements.

Cover: Cinémathèque Française, Paris

The preparation of the score (edited by Adriano, 1988)
was sponsored by the Swiss Cultural Foundation PRO
HELVETIA. An adapted version of Editions Salabert's

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HONEGGER: Les Misérables (Complete)

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