

Cellists' Corner

Brief Career Details of Important Cellists

prepared by David Johnstone from public information

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SPECIAL FEATURE on FERNAND QUINET

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Birth: 29th January 1898 - Charleroi (Belgium)

Death: 24th October 1971 - Liège (Belgium)

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The Belgian musician Fernand Quinet showed musical talent at an early age. He studied at the Royal Conservatories of Mons and Brussels: among his teachers were Adolphe Biarent , and he completed his theoretical studies with d'Indy at the Brussels Conservatory (1913–15). However, from the age of thirteen, he was already hired as a cellist at 'La Monnaie'. He played in the 'Pro Arte Quartet' from 1916, but almost gave up his career as a cellist in 1923. That is largely because in 1921 he received the prestigious composing 'First Grand Prix de Rome', for his cantata 'La Guerre'.

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He veered more towards the 'academic' side; he was director of the Charleroi Conservatoire from 1924 to 1938, a professor of harmony at the Brussels Conservatory from 1927 to 1938, and became the director of the Liège Conservatoire during a 25-year span starting in 1938, which really meant that he took over the management of that institution.

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The teaching appointments also gave him the opportunity to develop a conducting career. He specialized in French repertoire, conducting numerous premieres. In 1947/48 he founded the chamber orchestra of Liège, which in 1960 became the Orchester de Liège and later of symphonic size and renamed 'Orchester Philharmonique de Liège' in 1983. He was the chief conductor of the orchestra until 1965. He had been elected a member of the Belgian Royal Academy in 1954.

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Later in his life composition was not so important to him. Never-the-less he is noted in history as one of the first Belgian composers to reject the overriding Franck tradition. In fact, he came from a line closer to Fauré, though he was also influenced by Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel and Igor Stravinsky, to name three. Quinet leaves a good number of compositions of all kinds. The harmony of the *Trois mouvements symphoniques* suggest an Impressionist origin, and Quinet's ironic spirit led to some surprising chord progressions, as well as a lightness of touch and lively, incisive rhythms, as in *L'école buissonnière* for string quartet. These qualities are also found in his vocal music, which avoids an extreme lyricism.

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WORKS - a selective list:

Fanfare for Orchestra (1922)

Esquisse Symphonique (1930)

3 Mouvements Symphoniques (1931)

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1916-17)

Suite for 3 Clarinets (1923)

Sonata for Viola and Piano (1924)

L'école Buissonnière, for string quartet (1925)

2 Chants Hébraïques, for 2 voices and piano (1925)

Moralités non légendaires, for voice and orchestra (1926)

Fantaisie, for string quartet (1926)

Charade, for Piano Trio (1927)

+ a number of piano pieces, and others for organ, plus other songs, incidental music scores, and educational works

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'documenting the cello' - www.johnstone-music.com

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