

Mesens, Édouard Léon Théodore (1903-71): Overview of Writings

E.L.T. Mesens (1903-71) was a Belgian composer close to Satie and the Surrealist milieu, both musical and literary. His writings, like his compositions, are few: the main period during which he wrote music criticism lasted from 1922 to 1926. His complete written output relating to music has been inventoried and commented by Robert Wangermée in [*Moi je suis musicien. Écrits sur la musique*](#).

The combative Mesens pursued two objectives in his criticism: to promote new music and attack established musical institutions and personalities. He reviewed every kind of contemporary music (serious music, jazz, *chanson*, etc.) in various Belgian literary magazines from 1922 to July 1924. He then edited the Belgian journal *Music* between 1925 and 1927; during this period, he wrote 17 articles (out of 27 total pieces on music). Ultimately, following a lecture that he gave in March 1926 in the course of which his lack of restraint and of competent judgement were harshly criticised, he abandoned the career of composer and critic to reinvent himself definitively in the field of Surrealist art, as a gallery manager and collagist.

In his criticism, Mesens allows himself a number of literary flights of fancy, perhaps under the influence of his Surrealist friends. He often expresses his opinions in a peremptory and biased or even partisan manner. Wangermée (Mesens, 1998, pp. 65-6) indeed underlines that many of his articles broadly promote his network of musician friends (Karel Albert, Paul Magritte), his teachers (Paul Gilson), the composers he took as models (Satie, Auric, Milhaud), young musicians whose ideas he shared (e.g. Maxime Jacob), and the performers of his works (Evelyne Brélia, Marcelle Meyer).

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