

## Suzanne Demarquez (1891-1965): Overview of the Writings

There is currently no complete inventory of the writings of Suzanne Demarquez, whose critical and musicological work, like her compositions, remains largely unknown. Her literary output breaks down into three types of writing: concert reviews for various periodicals starting in the late 1920s; more substantial articles and tributes, less numerous but published regularly as part of her work as a critic; and biographies of composers, all released in the 1950s.

Demarquez made her name as a critic starting in the late 1920s, parallel to the development of her compositional career. She mainly wrote for *La Revue musicale*, to which she contributed from 1929 and especially 1932 until the journal's suspension in 1940. This periodical stands out for the number of women (composers, critics, and musicologists) present in its pages. Demarquez's post-1940 career is less documented. From this later period only four articles could be found, published between 1946 and 1955, including a response to [a survey conducted by Claude Arrieu](#) and homages to [Henry Prunières](#) (founder of the *Revue musicale*) and [Béla Bartók](#). The present article offers a preliminary overview of Demarquez's writings; it is possible that the composer regularly contributed to other periodicals, before and after 1940, but an in-depth research project would be needed for a complete inventory.

Her involvement in the *Revue musicale* largely consisted of concert reviewing (under the rubric "La musique en France et à l'étranger"), which occupied an important place in the journal. Demarquez reported on the activity of the major musical scenes and concert societies of her time (the Concerts Colonne, Concerts Padeloup, Société nationale de musique, etc.) in nearly 150 articles in the short format typical of the journal. She focused especially on the analysis of the works performed, sometimes with reference to the score, and little on the performance (except in a few articles on solo recitals). Her articles evince a keen interest in new music: the Jeune France and École de Paris groups, among others, feature in several of her articles.

When it comes to musical aesthetics, Demarquez appears as a support of an "impressionism" inherited from Debussy, a lineage in which she affiliates her own compositions. Her reviews celebrate the qualities of poetry, the picturesque, and above all what she calls "authenticity" and "personal originality". These positive values she contrasts to the "convenient formulas" resulting from "assembly line" academic training and the Neoclassical current of a faction of the musical scene in whose music she sees an attempt to "renew obsolete formulas".

Alongside this body of reviews, Demarquez published in the *Revue musicale* a dozen full-length articles. Among them one finds several obituaries and biographies of composers ([Holst](#), [Bruneau](#), [Delius](#), [Elgar](#), [Villa-Lobos](#)), three articles on national “schools” of composition ([Italian music of the eighteenth century](#), [the English school](#) and the role of [Edward Elgar](#)) – an interest that also comes through in her criticism – and one rather isolated article on [plainchant at Solesmes Abbey](#). Also notable is her interest in dance, on which she wrote three articles.

In the 1950s, Demarquez published four biographies of composers ([Jolivet](#), [Berlioz](#), [de Falla](#), and [Purcell](#)) with a musicological ambition. These books offer accessible narratives of the life and works of the composers, in which Demarquez shows her liking for anecdotes and asides as well as musical analysis, whose interest is signaled by Bernard Gavoty in his preface to the *Manuel de Falla*. The three historical works are constructed according to a tripartite structure of introduction, biography, and catalogue of the works. Music analysis takes a leading role, especially in the first book, devoted to Purcell, in which the author supplements the detailed study of the works with a history of the various musical forms favoured by the composer. The musical dimension is diminished in the following works which reserve a growing place for biographical narrative, generally confected from a compilation of pre-existing sources. The two dimensions intermingle in a fluid manner in the later biography of de Falla. The book devoted to André Jolivet, her contemporary, stands somewhat apart from the rest of her output in its form: the narrative alternates passages of dialogue between Demarquez and Jolivet, monologues by Jolivet or his wife, extracts from interview, without always enabling the reader to identify the sources. This work is also the only one in which the author acknowledges her own experience as a composer, like the subject of the book, and not just an analyst.

The same centres of interest in Demarquez’s criticism come up in these biographies: national schools, authenticity, musical modes, the myth of the composer (the notions of “genius” and “musical gift” are omnipresent). This link between historical work and critical work is made plain by various references to the modern scene in the midst of biographical narrative: comparison of Purcell’s counterpoint to that of Ravel, commentary on a recent revival of *Les Troyens*, and even an autobiographical narrative in the case of Jolivet. The scientific pretension of the works remains limited: the author relies on few sources and rarely cites them. She also adopted the ideas of her time when it came to the myth of the composer-genius or national musical identity. The quality of the writing and knowledge of Demarquez nevertheless was recognised by contemporaries in her lifetime, in both her critical and musicological work: on 28 Nov. 1952 she was admitted to the [Société française de musicologie](#), presented by Marc Pincherle and André Verchaly.

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11/12/2023

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To quote this article: Fauve Bougard, "Suzanne Demarquez (1891–1965): Overview of the Writings", Dictionary of Composer's Writings, Dictéco [online], ed. E. Reibel, last edited: 21/02/2025, <https://dicteco.huma-num.fr/person/51597>.