

**VICTOR LEGLEY:
SOME NOTES ON HIS THOUGHTS AND *CATHÉDRALE D'ACIER***

**VICTOR LEGLEY:
*APUNTES SOBRE SUS IDEAS Y SU CATHÉDRALE D'ACIER***

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Abstract:

The article proposes to extend the knowledge of the figure and work of Victor Legley. It offers some notes about his life, studies and professional activities. It informs about his activities as a musical philosopher, and makes some of his thoughts known about contemporary composition, music's social function, the composer's role, and the relations between composer, interpreter, critic and management, today. The major part of the article is dedicated to his compositions. *La Cathédrale d'acier, opus 52*, from 1958, has been chosen for an analytical research on his intense thematic work, typical for his production, and also to establish the general characteristics of this composition, representative of much of his work. Finally, we present some conclusions on the importance of his ideas and his production as a composer.¹

Key words:

Victor Legley; Royal Conservatory Brussels; Royal Belgian Academy of Sciences, Philology and Fine Arts; Musical philosophy; Composition; Thematic labour; *La Cathédrale d'acier*

Resumen:

El artículo propone ampliar el conocimiento de la figura y obra de Victor Legley. Empieza con unos apuntes sobre su vida, sus estudios y actividades profesionales. Destaca sus actividades como pensador de la música, y da a conocer algunas de sus ideas sobre la composición contemporánea, la función social de la música, el papel del compositor, el nivel estético en nuestros días. Buena parte del artículo se centra en su producción compositiva. Se ha escogido *La Cathédrale d'acier, opus 52*, de 1958, para hacer una investigación analítica del intenso trabajo temático, que es propio de su obra, y para establecer la características generales de esta composición, representativa de buena parte de su obra. Finalmente, se presentan unas conclusiones sobre la importancia de las ideas y la producción compositiva de Legley.

Palabras clave:

Victor Legley; Real Conservatorio de Bruselas; Real Academia de Ciencias, Letras y Bellas Artes de Bélgica; Filosofía musical; Composición; Trabajo temático; *La Cathédrale d'acier*

¹ This article is based on part of the investigation I did at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona:
DE ROECK, Ronald: *La producció de Victor Legley*, PhD in Musicology thesis. Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Facultat de Filosofia i Lletres, Departament d'Art i Musicologia, Dir. Prof. Dr. Francesc Cortès Mir. 871p. Unpublished. 2009.

A FEW BRIEF NOTES ON THE LIFE AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF LEGLEY

Victor Legley² was born on June 18, 1915, in Hazebroek. The First World War had forced his parents, Irma M. Pauwels and Pierre L. Legley to flee from their hometown, Ypres, (Flanders, Belgium). Ypres had been completely destroyed; when the family returned, they lived in the “Barracks of King Albert I social work” until they could buy a house in the street Dikkebussteenweg, their permanent family residence. Pierre worked for the Belgian national railway company. Irma was a machine operator at the Picanol weaving factory³.

At the age of eight, Victor began music and violin studies in Ypres, with the Music School’s director, Albert van Eegro. After he died, his successor Lionel Blomme, viola player and composer, a graduate of the Royal Conservatory Brussels, influenced young Victor to switch to the viola. In addition to viola, Legley studied theory, harmony and counterpoint with Professor Blomme, until the academic year 1932-1933. Legley always recognized the importance of these two teachers:

“Albert van Eegro was my first teacher, a great musician and a man who was all heart”⁴.

“As a young man [...] I had an excellent teacher whom I owe so much: Lionel Blomme really prepared me for my future”⁵.

In 1933, he passed the entrance exams at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels and the director, Joseph Jongen, fully validated the subjects of solfège, music theory and harmony. This permitted Legley to enrol for viola as “*cours principal*” and counterpoint and chamber music as *cours parallèles*. After only four years, he had obtained the Viola Virtuosity Prix Degree, with Professor François Broos, and the First Prize Degrees in Counterpoint⁶, Fugue⁷ and Chamber Music⁸.

After fulfilling his military service, Victor Legley married Beatrix Souvage⁹ on August 24, 1939. Only two days later, due to the outbreak of the Second World War, he was drafted, like so many other young men, until Belgium surrendered on May 28, 1940¹⁰. On November 28, 1940, Walter Legley was born, the only child of Beatrix and Victor, in Etterbeek, near Brussels, where the family lived¹¹.

2 His full name is Victor Evariste Albert Legley. The original pronunciation is: Le-glé with a dumb “y” and é as in René.

3 Letter from Dr. Walter Legley to Ronald de Roeck, dated 21.11.2004. Personal documentation. Cited in:

DE ROECK, Ronald: *La producció de Victor Legley. Op. cit.* All future sources are cited in this PhD thesis.

4 Letter from Victor Legley to Paul van Dinteren, dated 11.12.1989.

5 SIMON, Ludo; BEKKERS, Ludo; VAN DEN EYNDEN, Dirk: “Curriculum: Victor Legley Componist”, in *BRT-programma: Dienst Kunstzaken*, 14.3.1980. Transcript of the broadcast from 14/3/1980, Belgian national radio BRT.

6 With Professor Raymond Moulart.

7 With Professor Léon Jongen.

8 With Professor Maurice Dambois. Information extracted from the personal file of Legley as a student at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, made available by Dr. Johan Eeckeloo, its current librarian.

9 Beatrix Helena Souvage (*Ypres 28.09.1912; †Ostend, 22.09.2003).

10 Obtained from Legley’s military ID “n° Matricule 131.90954”.

11 Full name: Walter Pierre Henri Victor Legley. In the Kellestraat, a street in Sint-Pieters-Woluwe. Letter from Dr. Walter Legley, *op. cit.*

In 1941, Victor Legley became Professor Jean Absil's particular composition disciple¹². In only two years, Absil gave him such a thorough instruction that Legley could complete his studies by winning the First Second Prize of Rome, in 1943. Legley always expressed his admiration for Absil, affirming that

“His work contains beautiful and touching pages. As a pedagogue, he has fulfilled a task of immense importance [...]”¹³.

Meanwhile, Legley had begun his long professional relationship with the Belgian National Radio, which lasted from 1936 to 1976. From 1936 to 1947 he was violist of the Symphony Orchestra of the Nîr, with Franz André as senior conductor¹⁴. Legley stated:

“During my youth I expressed myself with the viola. At the radio, I started as a viola player with the Symphony Orchestra. [...] Such an orchestra is the best school that any musician could want, or even dream of [...]”¹⁵.

From 1947 to 1962, he was “Musicus-modulator” [producer] and “Muziekprogramator” [responsible for the music programme]. From 1962 to 1976, “Dienstchef ernstige muziek en derde programma” [head of production of serious music and the third programme]. Legley commemorated this period:

“I didn't want to leave the orchestra, but as a producer I had the whole orchestra in my hands and I found that more interesting”¹⁶.

Legley was a professor at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, from 1949 to 1977. Until the academic year 1969-1970, he was a harmony professor; afterwards composition professor¹⁷. He was also professor of harmony, musical analysis and composition, at the Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel, from 1956 to 1979¹⁸.

Victor Legley had good family relations. His parents didn't understand that music could be a profession; nevertheless they gave him full support in his musical studies¹⁹. His son, Dr. Walter Legley, remem-

12 Jean Nicolas Joseph Absil (*Bonsecours, Péruwelz, 23.10.1893; †Ukkel, 02.02.1974).

13 LEGLEY, Victor: “Aspecten van het Belgische Muziekleven”. Written preparation for an address [1958-1959] 40 pages.

14 Founded 01-05-1932, as “Symfonisch Orkest”, with 42 musicians and Arthur Meulemans as senior conductor. Reformed 01-02-1935, as “Groot Symfonie Orkest” with 60 musicians and Franz André (*Brussels, 1893; †1975) as senior conductor. In 1936 it became enlarged to 83 musicians. VAN DEN BUYS, Kristin: “De Beginjaren van de Belgische N.I.R. 1930-1940”, in *Het geheugen van de Geluidsfabriek*. Leuven, Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2004, pp. 9-40. ISBN 9789058673602.

15 LEGLEY, Victor: *Spiegelbeeld* [Mirror image] [Speech, written preparation, 11 pages], Sint-Pieters-Woluwe, 03.10.1980. Legley made this speech on the evening dedicated to him and his music, “Victor Legley-Avond”, at the Cultural Center of his hometown.

16 SIMONS, Ludo; BEKKERS, Ludo; VAN DEN EYNDEN, Dirk: “Curriculum: Victor Legley Componist”. 14.03.1980. *Op. Cit.*

17 Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles. “Nom: Legley – Prénoms: Victor – Né a Hazebrouck, le 18 juin 1915”. Information extracted from Legley's personal file as a professor at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, made available by Dr. Johan Eeckeloo, its current librarian.

18 Correspondence between Michel Stockhem and Victor Legley, from 24.08.1992 on. HUYBENS, Gilbert [dir.]: *Victor Legley 65, Hulde aan Victor Legley*. Buren, Nederland, Frits Knuf, 1980.

19 VUYLSTEKE, Herman: “Componistenportret”, in *Muziek en Woord*, n. 15 (December 1975) pp. 1-2; n. 16 (January 1976), pp. 4-6.

bers that Beatrix and Victor's relationship was "very close" during the fifty-five years of their marriage, that he enjoyed "the happiest childhood and youth that one can dream of", that his parents passed their love for music on to him, and that Victor was "my teacher, in the first place, then my father and my friend until his death, my best friend"²⁰.

Legley felt an obligation to provide for his family, his professional relationship to the Belgian National Radio, in addition to his teaching activities, gave an income that allowed the family to live comfortably. However, eventually, "being a composer" was the most important fact of his career: "All you have to remember about me is that I would have liked so much to have been a composer" Legley wrote shortly before he died, November 28, 1994, Ostend. Much of his professional life was indeed a search for this ideal of "being a composer".

LEGLEY, THINKER

The dizzying pace of time, during Legley's life, caused him some doubts about the future of the human person and the future of music:

"In my lifetime, I've found a lot of truths that were proven false the next day. All fixed values have derailed, [...] the only security I've left is the conviction I have of my concerns"²¹.

Nature was shrinking due to industrial development and growth of urban areas, the family house built in 1950, in a quiet street called precisely "Bosstraat", Forest Street, was engulfed by the growth of the city of Brussels²².

Legley was a person with many intellectual and cultural interests. He maintained friendly relations with other composers, musicians, writers and artists. He mastered six languages and was very interested in art, sociology and the history of cultures and religions. He was a great lover of literature, which had an important role in his vocal production²³.

His need for reasoned thought, his need for affection and his concern for music and its social importance, were Legley's principal motives to establish new links. His association with the Freemasonry, since 1953, became prominent: he reached the 33rd degree, the highest degree of philosophical Freemasonry²⁴.

20 Letter from Dr. Walter Legley to Ronald de Roeck, dated 21.11.2004. *Op. cit.*

21 LEGLEY, Victor: "Muzikale antipoden" [Musical antipodes]. *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België – Overdruk uit Academiae Analecta – Klasse der Schone Kunsten*, year 44, n. 3, (1983), pp. 3-11.

22 STUBBE, Hendrik: "Legley's gemaskerde romantiek", in *Muziek en Woord*, year 16, n. 188, p.6.

23 VAN LEUVEN, Eric: "Concert-info Victor Legley", in *Maandblad van de vzw Concertvereniging Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel departament van de Erasmushogeschool*, year 19 n. 3, (November 2004), pp. 2-5.

24 Victor Legley was initiated into Freemasonry on 20.11.1953 in Brussels, in the lodge "Balder". Then, in 1980, he was a founding member of the lodge "de Vier Ghecroonde" in Brussels. He was a member of the lodge "Open Raam" in Leuven, founded in 1978. These lodges belong to the obedience of Freemasonry "Het Grootoosten van België" [The Grand Orient of Belgium]. Was granted the 33rd degree. Dr. Walter Legley's response to Ronald de Roeck, dated 13.12.2009.

Legley participated so actively in the cultural and social debate that he became elected member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, Literature and Fine Arts of Belgium, from 1965 on, and also held its presidency during the year 1972²⁵. He was active as a member and president of musical competitions, including the Queen Elizabeth Competition²⁶. Once retired, he held the Belgian Association of Authors, Composers and Publishers' presidency, from 1980 to 1992, and that of the Union of Belgian Composers from 1985 to 1990²⁷.

As a thinker, Legley has made contributions in the field of musical aesthetics, ethics and the social function of music. He has dedicated a lot of attention to the contemplation of composition and stresses in his writings on the necessity that a composer:

- should have a thorough academic background²⁸;
- should connect with tradition, thanks to a profound knowledge of masterpieces, as they are the nucleus of tradition²⁹;
- should connect with his own national culture³⁰;
- should write a present-day music, thanks to an ongoing investigation of the works of his contemporaries³¹;
- should limit the aleatory aspect: the more it grows the greater the random element of improvisation, in detriment of the role of the composer³²;
- should write melodies and themes³³;
- should write in the first place for himself³⁴;
- should establish a link with “an” audience, creating works that give “joy” and not only works that could “arouse interest”³⁵;

25 Corresponding academic, by royal appointment of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Belgium, Administration of Scientific Research, dated 31.01.1966. Academic member of the Class of Fine Arts at the Royal Flemish Academy of Sciences, Philology and Fine Arts of Belgium, by appointment of the same Academy, from 29.01.1968 on. Head of the Class of Fine Arts and president of the Royal Flemish Academy of Science, Philology and Fine Arts of Belgium, by royal appointment of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Belgium, Administration of Scientific Research, dated 07.12.1971.

26 Appointment by the *Concours Musical International Reine Elisabeth de Belgique - Internationale Muziekwedstrijd Koningin Elisabeth van België*, dated 23.03.1953, designating Legley as a member of the jury in the first stage of the composition competition.

27 GERMONPREZ, Fred: “Victor Legley, nieuwe voorzitter SABAM”, in *SABAM Bulletin*, n. 3, (1980), pp. 119-121.

28 LEGLEY, Victor: “Actuele Aspecten voor een Compositieeler” [Current learning aspects of composition] in *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België Klasse der Schone Kunsten*, year 32 n. 2, (1970), pp. 3-16.

29 LEGLEY, Victor: “Muziek en traditie” [Music and tradition], in *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België Klasse der Schone Kunsten*, year 36 n. 3, (1974), p. 3-13.

30 STUBBE, Hendrik, VUYLSTEKE, Herman: “Victor Legley over het Belgisch muziekgebeuren: opklimmen tot de amateur” in *Muziekrant*, (January 1980), pp. 30-33. [Victor Legley comments the Belgian musical scene: climb up to the amateur].

31 LEGLEY, Victor: “Hedendaagse Muziek” [Contemporary music], in *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België Klasse der Schone Kunsten*, year 38 n. 3, (1976) pp. 3-13.

LEGLEY, Victor: “Jonge Muziek in Vlaanderen (Résumé)”. Preparation for an address, 19 pages.

32 LEGLEY, Victor: “Muziek en traditie”. *Op. cit.*

33 LEGLEY, Victor: “Hedendaagse Muziek”. *Op. cit.*

34 LEGLEY, Victor: “Voor wie componeren wij?” [For whom do we compose?], in *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België – Overdruk uit Academiae Analect – Klasse der Schone Kunsten*, year 42 n. 1, (1981), pp. 25-34.

35 LEGLEY, Victor: “Voor wie componeren wij?”. *Op. cit.*

– should write music that emerges from the pursuit of beauty³⁶.

Legley said that the quest for beauty is fundamental in any work of art:

“I’m convinced that everybody desires some kind of beauty, although everybody pursues it in his own manner. I can only say that I’ve striven to obtain beauty in my music”³⁷.

In relation to the necessity of writing melodies and themes, Legley said:

“Am I in the wrong when I express my sincere belief that the music lover seeks –in a more or less conscious way and everyone at his level– music he can recognise: an understandable melody or other elements the ear can identify? [...] Music without reiteration can not be understood. [...] A repeated theme is comprehensible to the ear. Serial elements demand written analysis. [...] I believe we can not demand the music lover to undertake such a research”.

Legley believed that every masterpiece has to connect with the tradition:

“Musical tradition implies the investigation and the study of all elements of the past that could be fruitful in the present. I don’t believe in rupture, as it is a sign of ignorance. Tradition implies professionalism. Tradition imposes the necessity to pass all indispensable knowledge from one generation to the next one. The respect for traditional knowledge is fundamental for a healthy evolution”³⁸.

If we take as a starting point the tripartite division described by Jean Molino and systematized by Jean-Jacques Nattiez³⁹, Legley considered that in the analysis of the dimensions of the musical object of art, the neutral level of the composition –the existence of the score– is critical, but that this is not its presence in reality desired by the composer: the composer considers the sounding interpretation as its conceptualized reality. Legley made an overview of the necessary relationships to obtain a composition’s sounding reality and insists on the existence of other factors between composer, performer and audience, namely organization, management, and critics.

Without the factors “organizer, manager and critic” the created musical object can’t achieve its desired sounding reality and can’t reach the public. Legley points at the responsibility of festival organizers, and alleges that they limit their activities to the promotion of a few stars and that they are neither interested in contemporary music nor in present-day musicians. Legley also evaluates

36 STUBBE, Hendrik: “Legley’s gemaskerde romantiek”, in *Muziek en Woord. Op. cit.*

LEGLEY, Victor: “Jong componist, wat nu?”. [Young composer, now what?]. Preparation for the inauguration speech of the academic year 1984-1985, at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, on 01.10.1984.

37 STUBBE, Hendrik: “Legley’s gemaskerde romantiek”, in *Muziek en Woord. Op. cit.*

38 LEGLEY, Victor: “Muziek en traditie”. *Op. cit.*

39 SOBRINO, Ramón: “Análisis musical: De las metodologías del análisis al análisis de las metodologías”, in *Revista de Musicología*, xxviii/1 (2005), pp. 667-696.

new media and repeatedly warned that the marketing and advertising are invading and controlling our lives⁴⁰.

Legley regrets that in the field of serious contemporary music, the support the composer receives often proves to be in an inverse relationship to his music's attraction on the public. It's a sign of insane confusion, when the approval of the audience no longer is valued and when it even becomes a disadvantage⁴¹.

We've given attention to all his production of articles and writings, and we've concluded that we consider justified to classify Legley as an important thinker about music and its social function⁴².

LEGLEY'S PRODUCTION AS A COMPOSER

Legley's 138 compositions form a large and important production, consisting of instrumental music for symphony orchestra, professional band, chamber orchestra, chamber formations and soloists: 8 symphonies, overtures, symphonic sketches, solo concerts, chamber music for 13, 9, 6, 4, 3 and 2 instruments, including 5 string quartets, solo pieces... and of vocal music, including an opera, lieder cycles and choral music... Most of my research on Legley is devoted to the study of these 138 compositions⁴³.

LEGLEY, SOUND ARCHITECT

Taking in consideration the limited space that I have in this context, I would like to highlight an important aspect of this composer, his masterly conceived thematic work, by analysing his melody and

40 LEGLEY, Victor: "Muziek en propaganda" [Music and propaganda], in *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België Klasse der Schone Kunsten*, year 40 n.1, (1978), pp. 3-25. LEGLEY, Victor: "Muziek en Radio" [Music and radio], in *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België Klasse der Schone Kunsten*, year 29 n. 1, (1967), pp. 3-16. LEGLEY, Victor: "Auteursrecht in de branding". [Copyright on the drift], in *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België – Overdruk uit Academiae Analecta – Klasse der Schone Kunsten*, year 48 n. 1, (1987), pp. 3-11. LEGLEY, Victor: "Muzikale antipoden" [Musical antipodes]. *Op. cit.*

41 LEGLEY, Victor: "Voor wie componeren wij?" [For whom do we compose?]. *Op. cit.*

42 DE ROECK, Ronald: *La producció de Víctor Legley. Op. cit.*

43 *La producció de Víctor Legley. Op. cit.* contains the first complete systematic list and complete thematic catalogue of Legley's compositions, with fundamental data, such as the original title, date and place, the dedication, the duration, movements or parts, the citation of the main themes or melodies, the instrumentation or orchestration, the circumstances of the publication or the manuscript score, some notes on the history or the historical context of the work, and of the reception made by the same composer of the impact of his compositions. The previous existing lists (know to me) of Legley's compositions are, in chronological order: *xxiii Festival Internazionale di Musica Contemporanea – Palermo-Taormina 22-30 Aprile 1949*. International Society for Contemporary music SIMC Regione Siciliana. Palermo, April 1949. WANGERMÉE, Robert: [Coord?]: *Catalogus van Werken van Belgische Componisten: Victor Legley*. Brussel, Belgisch Centrum voor Muziekdocumentatie, August 1953, 12 pages. TESSELY, Carine: *Victor Legley (1915) Inleiding tot zijn Oeuvre (Verhandeling aangeboden tot het bekomen van de graad van licentiaat)*. Leuven, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Departement voor Archeologie en Kunstwetenschap, Afdeling Muziekwetenschap, 1977, 238 pp. Not edited. HUYBENS, Gilbert: *Victor Legley 65, Hulde aan Victor Legley. Op. cit.*, pp. 14-29. CeBeDeM, Belgisch Documentatie Centrum voor Hedendaagse Muziek. [Bcdm.] *Componisten* [on line]. Brussel-les, CeBeDeM, <<http://www.cebedem.be/en/composers/1/94-igley-vic>>

thematic work in *La Cathédrale d'acier, opus 52, Esquisse symphonique d'après un tableau de Fernand Steven*, 1958, a mature and emblematic orchestral work, with a duration of about 12 minutes, representative of a significant part of Legley's production⁴⁴.

The **form** has sections with tempo changes; there are also different time signatures:

Andante maestoso (bars 1-19): bars 1-2 in 4/4, bars 3-19 in 3/4;

Allegro molto energico, ma non troppo vivo (bars 20-67): in 4/4;

Più lento (bars 68-105): in 4/4;

Tempo 1° [Allegro molto energico...] (bars 106-158): in 4/4;

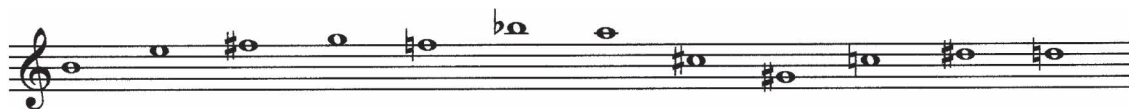
Adagio (bars 159-246): in 3/4.

The melody and thematic work of the 1st theme

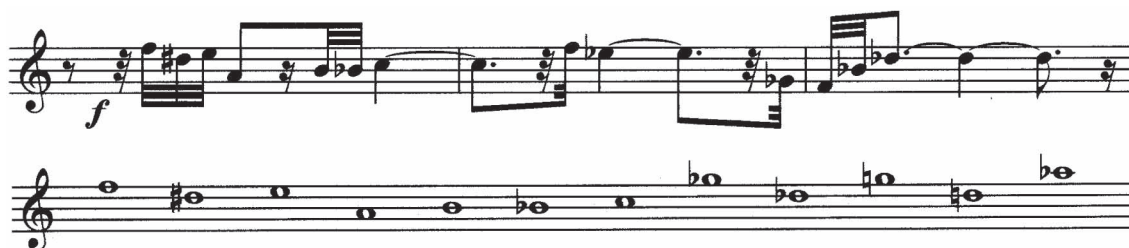
The melody begins with an exposition of the 1st theme (bars 1-10). Bars 1-4 of the 1st theme are played by the woodwinds, the violins (1st and 2nd) and violas; bars 5-10 by the violins and flutes. Let's look at bars 1-10, in an excerpt of the violin part:

In the construction of the theme we can observe a dodecaphonic influence, in the sense that Legley uses all twelve notes melodically. Obviously, the melody itself is not a tone row because there are repetitions of notes already given. On the other hand, the melodic and thematic intention to use all 12 notes is evident. Here is the first tone row on which the melody seems to be based, with omission of the repeated notes:

⁴⁴ *The Steel Cathedral, opus 52, Symphonic sketch based on a painting by Fernand Steven*. Edited by CeBeDeM, copyright 1959, n. B364/3169 30.12.65 65-337.



Between bars 6 and 8, the violas, oboes, cor anglais, clarinets and trumpets play a second voice. A second tone row seems to be its melodic base. Here we have this second voice and its tone row, the second one, without repeated notes:



The last notes which complete the second series are found in bars 10, 11 and 17. Legley is likely to have wanted to complete this tone row of twelve notes, but it is also possible that he conceived it with nine notes and that the last three notes do not belong in it. Meanwhile, the violins and flutes play the first voice of the 1st theme's second part, with a melody that seems to belong to a third tone row. This third tone row consists of ten notes and starts on the second half of bar 6, if we accept that it begins one note before the first row has ended:



The bass instruments play a third voice in bars 7 and 8, as we can see in the following excerpt. In bars 1 to 5 and 9 to 10 they play a pedal note C. It's possible, again, to consider a tone row as the melodic basis of this base line, which consist of ten notes, with the last two in bar 20. Bars 7-9:

Flutes 1-2 (partially 8a), violins 1-2 (1st partially 8a)

Oboes (partially 8a), cor anglais, clarinets, all tacet in bar 9
French horns 1-2, 1st trumpet (bars 7-8)

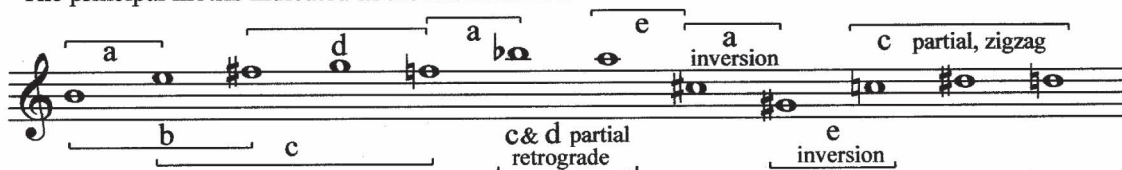
Bass clarinet, bassoons 1-2, contrabassoon (8b), cellos, double basses (8b)

Ignoring the repeated notes, this is the fourth tone row:

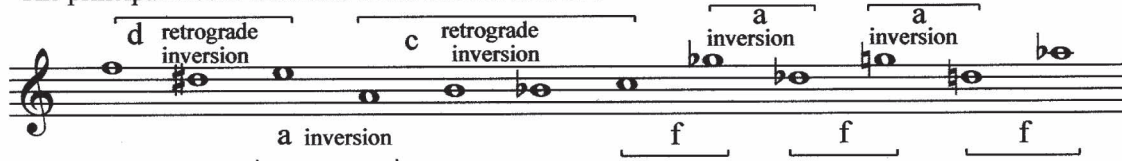


In this composition there is a very intense thematic work. All these series have the same motifs. To facilitate the identification of these motifs, throughout this work, we will assign a letter to each of them. Let's look at the motifs indicated in the tone rows and in the first theme.

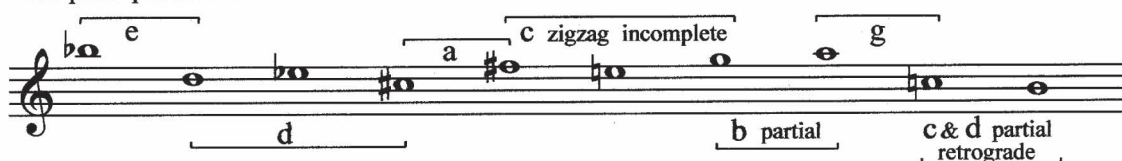
The principal motifs indicated in the first tone row



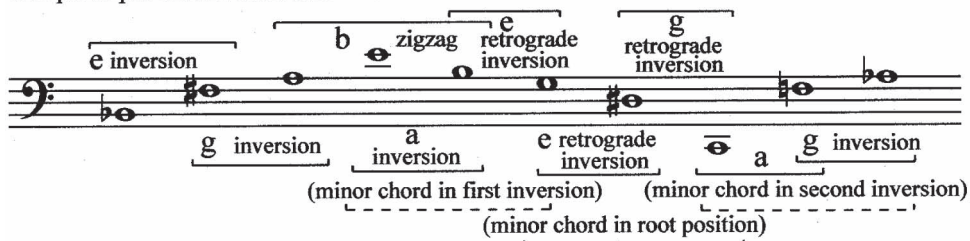
The principal motifs indicated in the second tone row



The principal motifs indicated in the third tone row



The principal motifs indicated in the fourth tone row



We have observed that the series are constructed with the same seven motifs (a-g). Let's examine these motifs indicated directly in the 1st theme:

The image shows three staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, annotated with letters a-g and descriptive terms. The first staff starts with a *ff* dynamic and features motifs labeled 'a', 'b', 'c', 'd', 'C partial retrograde', 'b partial', and 'e'. The second staff starts with a *f* dynamic and includes '(1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th degrees in a minor scale)', 'c zigzag', 'd b zigzag & inversion 2d interv.', 'g inversion', 'b partial', 'e', 'd', and 'retrograde inversion'. The third staff includes '(Minor chord in second inversion)', 'zigzag', 'a', 'g inversion', 'b zigzag', 'inversion', 'a', 'e inversion', 'b inversion', 'a', 'inversion', 'a', and 'inversion'.

The melody and thematic work of the 2nd theme

The 2nd theme (bars 20-30) with its development (bars 31-67) has another tempo: *Allegro molto energico, ma non troppo vivo. Robusto*. Between bars 20 and 24 we find two consecutive tone rows, which we consider to serve as the basis for the melody of the 2nd theme. Eliminating the repeated notes, we have tone rows five and six:

The image shows two staves of musical notation, each containing a tone row. The first staff has notes: Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb, Cb, Fb, Bb. The second staff has notes: Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb, Cb, Fb, Bb.

In the construction of these two series there is a notable unity, since the intervals of notes 2-5 of the fifth tone row are identical to the intervals of notes 3-6 of the sixth; the same notes 2-4 of the fifth tone row are identical to the retrograde of its notes 9-7, the retrograde inversion of its notes 12-10, and almost identical to the retrograde movement of its notes 7-5. We can verify that these series are built with the same motives that we have indicated before:

The principal motifs indicated in the fifth tone row

The fifth tone row is shown on a treble clef staff. The notes are G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. Brackets and labels identify motifs: 'a' (G-A), 'a inversion' (A-B), 'b zigzag' (B-C), 'a' (C-D), 'a inversion' (D-E), 'c & d partial retrograde' (E-F), 'c & d partial retrograde' (F-G), 'a inversion' (G-A), 'c & d partial' (A-B), 'c & d partial' (B-C), and 'a inversion' (C-D).

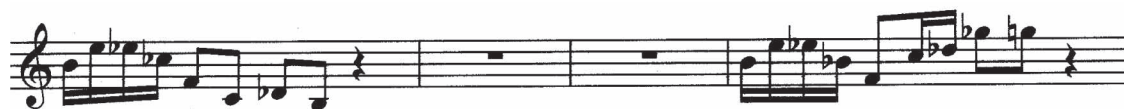
The principal motifs indicated in the sixth tone row

The sixth tone row is shown on a treble clef staff. The notes are G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. Brackets and labels identify motifs: 'g inversión' (G-A), 'c & d partial retrograde' (C-D), 'a inversion' (A-B), 'e inversión' (E-F), 'a' (G-A), 'e inversión' (E-F), 'a' (G-A), 'f inversión' (F-G), 'b' (A-B), and 'inversion of the 2nd interval' (A-B).

Let's look at the exposition of the first part of the 2nd theme, bars 20-24:

The score shows four measures in 4/4 time. Measure 20 starts with a forte (f) dynamic and a series of accents (>) over the notes. The key signature changes from C minor to E-flat major in measure 21, then to G minor in measure 22, and finally to A major in measure 23. Measure 24 continues in A major. Chord symbols are written below the bass line: Dvii T, D, S=Sp D T, S, T=Tp, T S D6=S6, DpIII6, D.

We find the last partial reexpositions of the 2nd theme in bars 58 and 61, played in octaves by the strings:



The melody and thematic work of the 3rd theme

We find a third theme in the central part of the composition, *Più lento*, (bars 68-105). It starts with **motif c** in conjunct movement and continues with the typical perfect fourths (**motif a**).

The violins and violas expose the theme, based on **motif c**. Bars 68-70:

Musical score for bars 68-70, showing the first three staves (Violin I, Violin II, and Viola) with various annotations for motifs and transformations. The score is marked *mf*. Annotations include: **c**, **a**, **retrograde inv. int.**, **g retrograde inv. int.**, **b zigzag**, **a retrograde inv. int.**, **c & d partial**, **c retrograde**, **c partial retrograde**, and **a**.

The woodwinds and the horns take over the second half of this 3rd theme, bars 71-73:

Musical score for bars 71-73, showing the woodwinds and horns parts with detailed annotations for motifs and transformations. Annotations include: (minor chord: 1st i 2nd part), (major chord: 1st part), (minor chord: 1st part), **a retrograde inversion**, **e retrograde inversion**, **g retrograde inversion**, **partial**, **c zigzag**, **a retrograde**, **g retrograde inversion**, **a retrograde**, **c partial zigzag**, **b m. contrario**, **g retrograde inversion**, **b partial**, **c & d partial**, **e retrograde inversion**, **partial retrograde**, **d**, **c & d partial retrograde**, **d**, **partial**, **c partial retrograde**, **e retrograde inversion**, **c & d partial**, and **g inversion**.

notes and **motif c** in zigzag. From bar 116 on, a new development of the 2nd theme begins. The head of the 2nd theme is reexposed, a perfect fourth higher than the original exposition in bar 20; a major second higher than in bar 27:

Bar 116 musical notation. The staff shows a sequence of notes with various annotations above and below. Above the staff, brackets group notes as 'c & d partial', 'b zigzag', and 'c & d partial'. Below the staff, brackets group notes as 'a', 'a inversion', 'a inversion retrograde', and 'c & d partial'.

In bars 117-120 there is a development of a characteristic cell, based on **motifs b** (partial), **e** and **a** (retrograde):

Musical notation for bars 117-120. The staff shows a sequence of notes with annotations above and below. Above the staff, brackets group notes as 'b e', 'b e', 'b e', 'b e', 'c', 'b e', 'c', and 'c'. Below the staff, brackets group notes as 'a', 'a', 'a', 'a', 'a', 'a', and 'a'.

We find the inversion of notes 1-4 of the fifth tone row, and the retrograde of its notes 3-7, in the bass (bars 122-124):

Bar 122 musical notation in the bass clef. The staff shows a sequence of notes with various annotations above and below.

5th tone row, notes 1-5 and its inversion

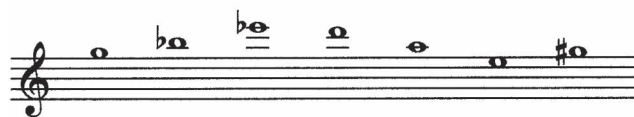
Musical notation for the 5th tone row, notes 1-5 and its inversion. The staff shows notes with annotations above and below. Above the staff, brackets group notes as 'a', 'a', and 'a inversion'. Below the staff, brackets group notes as 'c & d partial inversion', 'a inversion', and 'a a'.

5th tone row, notes 1-7 and its retrograde

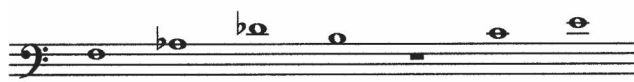
Musical notation for the 5th tone row, notes 1-7 and its retrograde. The staff shows notes with annotations above and below. Above the staff, brackets group notes as 'a', 'a', 'a retrograde inv', and 'c & d partial'. Below the staff, brackets group notes as 'c & d partial inversion', 'b zigzag', 'c & d partial', and 'a a a mov. contrari'.

Read the retrograde from right to left

The bass line in the second half of bar 124 is the sixth tone row's partial retrograde:



Sixth tone row



Its partial retrograde (read the retrograde from right to left)

In bars 125-126 there is a brief development of three chromatic notes in a row, **motif d** zigzag, that we had noticed in the exposition of the 2nd theme, bars 23, 31, 38, 42, 49-51, always in a lower register.

In the development of the 2nd theme, from bar 127 on, it reaches a point where the bass is full of semiquavers (sixteenth notes). The thematic material is the basis for the bass line: on the 1st beat of bars 127 and 129 and twice in bar 132 we see the head of the 2nd theme (in bars 129 and 132 literally, in bar 127 with G as the first note instead of F). The perfect fourth, characteristic interval is present in bars 127, 128, 130, 133, 134 and 135, a part from its presence as head of the theme. We can note other imitations of parts of the theme, for example, on the 4th beat of bar 127 a partial retrograde imitation of the head of the theme.

In bars 133-135, in the viola part, there is an imitation of thematic material, mostly the typical perfect fourths (**motif a**), similar to the exposition in bar 24. Let's compare the violin and viola part (in octaves), from bar 24, with the viola part in bars 133-134:



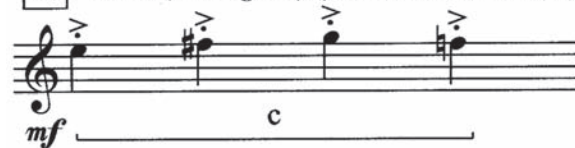
The melodic line of the perfect fourths followed by a minor third and another perfect fourth is similar. The viola part of bar 134 is repeated in bar 135 and imitated in bars 139-140 and 145.

There is a reexposition of **motif c**, one of the principal motifs in this piece, in bars 131, 136, 141-142 and 148-152.

131 Clarinets, 1st & 2nd (8b), French horns 2 & 4 (8b), 2nd violin



136 1st oboe, cor anglais (8b), French horns 1 & 4 (8b), 1st violin



Flutes, oboes (8b)
clarinets (8b), trumpets 1 & 3 (8b),
1st violin

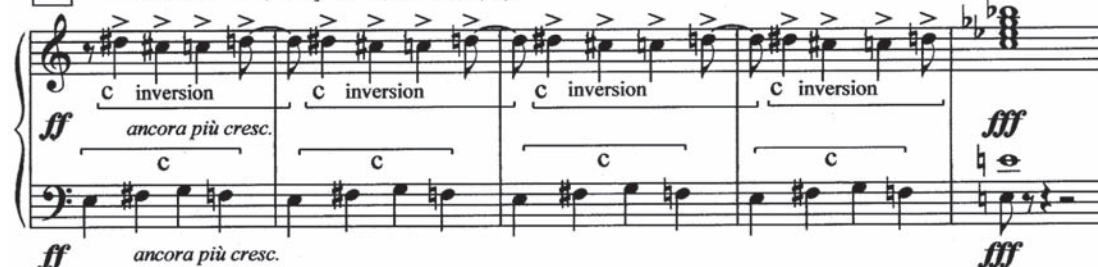
Bass clarinet, bassoons 1 & 2 (8b), contrabassoon (8b),
trombones 1-3, tuba (8b), double bass (8b)

141



Flutes (8a), oboes 1 & 2 (1st 8a), cor anglais, clarinets 1 & 2 (1st 8a),

148 French horns 1 & 3, trumpets 1-3, 1st violin (8a)



Bass clarinet (8a), bassoons 1 & 2 (1st 8a), contrabassoon (8b),

French horns 2 & 4 (8a), trombones 1-3 (1st y 3th 8a), tuba, double bass

The melody and thematic work of the final part Adagio, bars 159-246

The final part begins with the reexposition of the 1st theme's head, **motif a**, followed by a partial **motif c** in zigzag and **motif a** in inversion, in bar 159. In the next bar **motif d** appears. We could describe the melody as a brisk ascending line, in three notes (build on the intervals of the perfect fourth and major seventh), followed by a descending line with five intervals (augmented second, two perfect fourths, a broidery with a minor second and an augmented second).

In bar 161 the melodic line is based on the D major seventh chord's arpeggio and on **motif a**. Let's look at the motifs indicated in bars 159-166:

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment in the Adagio section, covering bars 159 to 166. The notation includes treble and bass staves with various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings (p). Brackets and labels identify specific motifs and intervals:

- System 1 (Bars 159-160):**
 - Bar 159: Treble clef contains motifs 'a', 'c partial zigzag', and 'inversion a a'. Bass clef contains 'c & d partial'.
 - Bar 160: Treble clef contains 'd', 'g inversion retrograde', 'f', and 'int. inversion'. Bass clef contains 'c partial zigzag' and 'd zigzag'.
- System 2 (Bars 161-162):**
 - Bar 161: Treble clef contains 'e inversion', 'd', 'e', 'a inversion', and 'd inversion'. Bass clef contains 'e retrograde inversion', 'a', and 'a inversion'.
 - Bar 162: Treble clef contains 'g inversion inversion', 'a', 'f', 'e', 'c partial zigzag', 'd', and 'C partial zigzag'. Bass clef contains 'c & d partial'.

The first half of this phrase (bars 159-162) is repeated in bars 167-170 and imitated, a major second up, in bars 179-182.

The thematic way of thinking is so profoundly integrated in this composition that it compels us to consider the motif's thematic role in its polyphony.

Motif d is reexposed in bars 162-163, retrograde in bars 171-172, authentic in bar 174 and in inversion in bars 194-195, 205-206 and 208-217.

Motif a is present from the very beginning (bar 1). The first succession of two or more successive perfect fourths is exposed in bar 10 and reexposed on numerous occasions. Now, we find it as an element of polyphony in bars 205-217. We've seen the first perfect fourths with the exact notes C-G and F#-C# in bars 24-25 and now these exact notes are reexposed in bars 117-120.

We've found chromatic notes separated by an octave for the first time in bar 4, a partial **motif b** with the notes G-A, followed an octave below with the notes C#-G#, **motif a** in inversion. We find it now, as a part of polyphony, in bars 206-217. In the violins and high woodwinds in bars 206-207, in the bass from bar 208 on.

sempre lo stesso t° (senza accelerare)

208

mf cresc. poco a poco
ben marcato

cimbal *avec mailloches*

gong *pp cresc. poco a poco* *laisser vibrer*

sempre molto cresc. fin al -

211

214

lunga fff

fff lunga

The surprising novelty in the last section of this piece is the appearance of the harp, an exceptional entrance when there are only 39 bars to the end. The harp plays descending perfect fourths, **motif a** in inversion, in crotchets (quarter notes) and repeats seven times the notes Cb^{'''}- Gb^{''}- Db[']- Ab['], adding three more notes the sixth time: Fb[']- Cb[']- Gb. This final part brings us comfort and sublimation, with its soft timbres, its gentle rhythms (except for a last outburst of energy in bars 240-243), its soothing harmony and the unexpected involvement of the harp – suddenly on the stage like a *deus ex machina* – that blesses us with the symbolism of the magical number seven in its obstinate thematic intervention.

244

1st clarinet *mp* *lunga*

Harp *dim.* *lunga*

French horns 1&2

Bassoons *p* *dim.*

Violas, cellos, double bass *pp* *lunga* *lunga*

LA CATHÉDRALE D'ACIER'S GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Melody and thematic work

The analytic investigation demonstrates that Legley conserves the traditional concepts of melody and thematic work. There is always a melodic line and never a construction where the same material occupies the verticality and horizontality.

Legley obtains a personal melodic character from a mixture of repeated notes and conjunct movements with other, modern intervals who derive from the frequent use of the whole tone scale, large intervals and successive perfect fourths.

The whole construction is based on seven short thematic motifs. The melody has a very close relationship to the characteristic thematic intervals. We can regard the melody as based upon tone rows, all of them build with these same seven motifs. These tone rows, however, are used in strictly traditional counterpoint with imitations and tonal polyphony based on thematic material.

Legley's concern to arrive at a coherent and attractive thematic construction shows itself clearly. It is classical because it connects with the traditions of counterpoint, thematic work and tonal base... It is contemporary because its ideas and materials are up to date.

Rhythm

The rhythm serves the melody and the thematic work, but it is, nevertheless, an element which has its own importance in Legley's work. It's a miscellaneous mixture of regular simple rhythms with syncopated and irregular rhythms that obtains a hybrid character.

Tempo and time signatures

The indications of transitory changes in tempo as *ritenuto*, *accelerando*, or *più lento* are abundant in Legley's work. Changes in time signatures are usual in his production, but limited in this composition.

Form

Legley's construction of his musical forms is one of the main factors that makes us consider his work neoclassic. His structures and phrases are always clear and well defined. The structure of his themes is always logical and well conceived.

Tonality and harmony

This composition has a tonality (as have all Legley's works I know). This tonality is sometimes enlarged and then contains elements of different modes (when elements of the major en minor scale with the same tone centre are combined), arriving occasionally at bitonality (when elements of different scales with different tone centre are combined). It is my sincere opinion it is never atonal music, although there are other points of view known to me.⁴⁵ Indeed, Legley uses tone rows in this work, but he uses them only as thematic and melodic material, never in a dodecaphonic or serial way. It's also true that his harmony is, at times, aggressive and dissonant, but we can't confuse those characteristics with atonality. I believe to have demonstrated in my analytic research that there is always a tonal organisation and harmonic functionality⁴⁶.

Legley sporadically uses enlarged chords, obtained through the fusion of two traditional chords with elements in common; they are connected with his use of enlarged tonality. There are often unusual harmonic relations and resolutions; but there are also phrases with a less complicated, more consonant harmony. It's greatly thanks to the harmony that this composition achieves its final character of resolution and sublimation. Legley combines tonal and harmonic innovation with a profound knowledge of traditional harmony, and has achieved a personal tonal language.

45 PIERRE-PETIT: "Les Disques. Suite pour orchestre (Victor Legley)", in *Revue officielle du Conservatoire national supérieur de musique de Paris*, (February 1954). MICHEL, Arthur: "Le violoniste Carlo Van Neste - Le compositeur Victor Legley", in *Le Phare*. Brussels, 27.01.1949, p. 2. RASMUSSEN, Mary: "Reviews", in *Brass Quarterly*. New Hampshire, USA, vi/3, (Spring 1963), p. 134. LUPI FREIRE, Judith: "Música: Concerto pela Orquestra Sinfónica de Radiodifusão-Televisão Belga", in *Novidades*, 17.10.1966. TESSELY, Carine: *Victor Legley (1915) Inleiding tot zijn Oeuvre*. *Op. cit.*

46 See full analysis in: *La producción de Víctor Legley*. *Op. cit.*

Orchestration

The thematic work is present in all parts. The melodic and rhythmic patterns are modified in the developments. There are transitions with a special thematic treatment reserved for the voices that mostly play the accompaniment. There is an alternation between the use of soloist timbres, a limited use of mixture between groups and soloists, and a tutti writing very similar to Paul Gilson's treatise⁴⁷.

Indications for the interpretation

The indications about character, dynamics, duration, accentuation... are abundant. The interpretation of Legley's compositions requires a great care and sensibility, in order to live up to the composer's intentions.

Symbolism

On Steven's painting we see an old Cathedral in ruins, and a new metal one which replaces it. In the centre of the painting is an illuminated but small human figure. The person, fragile as he may be, remains protagonist although times change.

Legley has constructed his composition with seven motifs and with an unexpected appearance of the harp, precisely 39 bars before the end, that plays exactly seven times a pattern based on **motif a**. All of this suggests that Legley is expressing his convictions in a symbolic way.

CONCLUSIONS

Legley's thoughts about music and its social relevance are significant and of great help to investigate his compositions. His eight papers published by the Royal Belgian Academy, written between 1967 and 1987 (and cited in this article) are the culmination of his ideas on which he worked from 1948 on, and which he developed in his writings and preparations for addresses and speeches.

For Legley, composition between 1940 and 1994 had to be profound, and had to express the "existence" and "presence" of the human being. To do so, he used his deep, not always positive feelings. Legley's generation had been strongly affected by the two world wars. In his compositions, there is seldom room for sensuality or voluptuousness. Doubt, suspicion, anxiety, fear and aggression are often expressed. However, there are also frequent expressions of good humour, enthusiasm, energy, comprehension, faith, pardon and sublimation.

In order to interpret correctly Legley's compositions, it is very important to understand that he pursued beauty. That he wanted the musicians to play with delicacy. Legley affirmed that the Second World

47 GILSON, Paul: *Le Tutti Orchestral -2me Edition revue et augmentée*. Bruxelles, Schott Frères, 1921.

War caused an aesthetic disaster, and that nothing contemporary was allowed do sound beautiful any more⁴⁸. He also said that the quest for beauty is fundamental in any work of art⁴⁹.

Legley's articles and preparations for addresses and speeches make it clear that he was very well informed about all avant-garde tendencies, electronic, electro acoustic and concrete music. He respected all of these techniques but didn't want to apply them⁵⁰.

Legley believed that his compositions had to be totally up to date, but that there was neither a necessity to use recent invented avant-garde notation, nor a reason to use new invented instruments. Every masterpiece has to connect with tradition⁵¹. For Legley, composition depends on thematic work, melody, a traditional notation of notes and rhythms and a modern tonality and harmony⁵².

The information obtained in the thematic and commented catalogue and especially in the analytical investigation of his compositions, has permitted me to describe the personal language of Legley and place his production as posterior to the Flemish romantic nationalism, influenced by the great masters of the past and also by the international contemporary tendencies. I have proposed the following classification of his production: His study period goes on until 1945. Then there is a short period of expressionism and relative rupture with tradition, until 1948. Afterwards there is a long period of maturity and a production of neoclassical works, and works with a mixture of neoclassicism and expressionism⁵³. *La Cathédrale d'acier* belongs to this second category.

I am convinced that the totality of Legley's composition form a transcendent, modern and personal production. I believe that a good deal of his works are important, that some of them are masterpieces and that we should study them, interpret them and be able to pass from a initial interest to a stage of "joy" that they can give us.

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48 LEGLEY, Victor: "Actuele Aspecten voor een Compositieeler", *Op. cit.*

49 STUBBE, Hendrik: "Legley's gemaskeerde romantiek" in *Muziek en Woord. Op. cit.*

50 LEGLEY, Victor: "Hedendaagse Muziek", *Op.cit.*

51 LEGLEY, Victor: "Muziek en traditie", *Op. cit.*

52 LEGLEY, Victor: "Voor wie componeren wij?", *Op. cit.*

53 *La producció de Victor Legley. Op. cit.*