

TABLE 1  
Formal construction of *La Création du Monde*

Introduction [*Ouverture or Prélude*]

Theme A

Theme B

Theme C

Five Main Sections

I	II	III	IV	V
Fugue theme D	[rhythm. sync. var. theme A]	Theme G violins ⇒ cl. ⇒ trp.	Theme H piano + strings	Coda {F + D}
Accomp. theme E {A + C}	[Recap. fl. theme B]  Theme F in oboe (Blues form 4 + 4 + 6)		Theme I clarinet {D + B}  Theme J oboe	

the 1930s came initially through negotiations with Diaghilev and the Ballets Russes, then after Diaghilev's death in 1929 mainly with Leonide Massine of the then newly formed Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo, as later on with George Balanchine of the American Ballet as well.

Although negotiations for a ballet had been going on for some time, the idea of *Noblissima Visione* was realised through a coming together of

circumstances whereby Hindemith and Massine happened purely by chance to be together in Florence for the Maggio Fiorentino in 1937. Massine wrote about this in his book, *My Life in Ballet*:

[Hindemith] had just come from the great church of Santa Croce, which contains the frescoes by Giotto depicting the life of St Francis of Assisi. He had been deeply impressed by them, and taking me by the arm

he hurried me back to the church to see them. I too was struck by their spiritual beauty and could well understand why they had so profoundly moved Hindemith. But when he suggested that we should do a ballet together on the life of St Francis, I hesitated

After much research on the subject by Massine, and having discussed the matter with François Mauriac in Paris, he later decided that 'the idea had now fired my imagination, and I felt that I could make something of it. I therefore wrote to Hindemith, inviting him and his wife to visit me on Galli' (Massine 1968:s.p.). Thus it came about that between 15 and 24 September 1937 Hindemith and Massine worked on the ballet *Noblissima Visione* on this island in the Gulf of Salerno. Not only did the cross-cultural presentation in this work come from Italy, but also from the French side, as Hindemith had decided to incorporate old French music using, for example, the troubadour melody, *Ce funt en mai* (Briner 1996:245).

## Ballet after World War II

One of the parallelisms in the lives of Milhaud and Hindemith was that both composers were forced by the circumstances of World War II to emigrate to the United States of America in 1940. For both of them this meant the traumatic experience of being drastically – and for some time at least irrevocably – separated from their home countries. In terms of their compositional output, this move also signified a turning point, which can very clearly be seen in the stylistic changes which took place in their ballet production.

The emergence of psychopathological analysis and existentialist pessimism after 1945, especially noticeable in literature but also in ballet libretti and theatre manuscripts, can be ascribed directly to World War II (Hauser 1974:790). With the notion of the so-called Parisian after-War Ballet Existentialism, many works were performed

dealing with subjects such as death, the undermining of value systems. In some cases these went as far as perversity and decline. A good example of this tendency is *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort* (1946). Milhaud's first two American ballets, *Les Cloches* (1945) and *Adame Miroir* (1948), can already be described as paradigmatic of the existentialist crisis after World War II (Seipp 1996:117). However, Hindemith was expected by Massine, whom he had met up with again in the United States, to create only orchestral versions of piano pieces by Carl Maria von Weber for a ballet with the proposed title, *Ballet nach Sprichwörtern und nach Bildern von Pieter Brueghel*. This of course Hindemith refused to do. The anomaly was that in 1952 Massine's big rival, George Balanchine, could do the ballet première in New York of the imaginative Webern orchestral transformations of Hindemith's *Symphonic Metamorphosis*. For the rest of his ballet production during these years, Hindemith mostly had plans and did sketches for ballets on comic subjects.

## Conclusion

To return to the ballet scene in Paris and more specifically to Milhaud, one can only conclude that from 1945 until about 1968 there was a general lack regarding the excitement of the avant-garde productions of the 1910 and 1920s, such as might be found in the distinct cross-cultural influences that may be traced in the Milhaud ballet, *La Création du Monde*, as well as in its German counterpart, the 1938 Hindemith ballet, *Noblissima Visione*. In his ballet scores Milhaud confirms and reflects the fundamental pendulum between conservatism and modernism that was prevalent in the French ballets between 1910 and 1960, having made not only a decisive, but also a proactive contribution to the French, and I believe possibly the global ballet of the twentieth century.

## Notes

- 1 This article is a reworking of a paper read at the Jahrestagung, Gesellschaft für Musikforschung, Saarbrücken, 30 September 1999.
- 2 *La Création du monde*. This can be regarded as the most honourable musical literature of jazz written by the whites (own translation).
- 3 This possesses its own charm; ... nevertheless carrying the personality of its author (own translation).

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