

92. Sérénade pour 4 Cors en Fa (1901)

Louis Delune
(1876-1940)
transcribed by Jeroen Billiet

Delune, Louis

(born 15 March 1876 in Charleroi, Belgium; died 5 January 1940 in Paris)

Louis Delune studied with Edgar Tinel at the Brussels Conservatory, where he earned an Académie royale first prize for his Piano Concerto. 1905 saw him win the Belgian Prix de Rome for the cantata *La mort du roi Reynaud*. After attempts to establish a society for modern symphonic works faltered, Delune moved to Paris (though he returned regularly to teach piano at the Brussels Conservatory). The French capitol offered large and enthusiastic audiences for contemporary music, and Delune and his wife Jeanne, a talented cellist, were hailed in the pages of *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde artiste*, and *Gil Blas*. *Le Guide Musical* recorded,

We had the pleasure of hearing some works by the Belgian composer Louis Delune, whose name is well known to our readers. His *Poème* for cello, as played by Madame Jeanne Delune, is distinguished by delicacy and inspiration, very different from so many mundane works for this instrument. Exquisite talent, remarkable musical intelligence, [...] fine works interpreted by *vrais artistes*.

Delune was in demand as a pianist (he toured with the eminent violinist César Thomson for decades), but also as conductor and composer. Ferruccio Busoni's series of modern music concerts in Berlin featured Delune's work alongside new pieces by Debussy, Delius, Elgar, Nielsen, Sibelius, and Bartók. 1914 brought the cataclysm of war, and with the August invasion of Belgium the composer found refuge in London. He would take French citizenship after returning to Paris, and it was there, after two compositionally fruitful decades, that Delune died in 1940 aged sixty-three.

Delune left a varied catalogue of works, largely published by Editions Max Eschig: the opera *Tania*, ballets, symphonies (including the *Symphonie chevaleresque*), concertos for piano and cello, songs, piano pieces, and chamber music. Though the latter includes major works like string quartets and sonatas for violin and cello, it also yields Delune's *Sérénade pour 4 Cors en Fa*. This 1901 miniature is full of fine detail even while its impressive sound canvas strains the confines of its modest *chasse* origins. A copy in the possession of Edmond Leloir, the long-serving solo hornist of the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, was later stored in the Leloir Collection of the Library of the Geneva Conservatory. In time a copy of this made by Daniel Lienhard of the Berner Symphonieorchester was transcribed by the Belgian hornist-scholar Jeroen Billiet. It is published here for the first time, 112 years after its composition.

Permission to publish Delune's *Sérénade* was generously given by director Jacques Tchamkerten of the Bibliothèque du Conservatoire de Musique de Genève, which houses the MS.

Text by William Melton