



Arthur Honegger (10 March 1892 – 27 November 1955) was a Swiss composer, who was born in France and lived a large part of his life in Paris. He was a member of *Les Six*. His most frequently performed work is probably the orchestral work *Pacific 231*, which is interpreted as imitating the sound of a steam locomotive. He initially studied harmony and violin in Paris, and after a brief period in Zürich, returned there to study with Charles-Marie Widor and Vincent d'Indy. He continued to study through the 1910s, before writing the ballet *Le dit des jeux du monde* in 1918, generally considered to be his first characteristic work. In the early 1920s Honegger shot to fame with his "dramatic psalm" *Le Roi David* (King David), which is still in the contemporary choral repertoire. Between World War I and World War II, Honegger was very prolific. He composed the music for Abel Gance's epic 1927 film, *Napoléon*. He composed nine ballets and three vocal stage works, amongst other works. One of those stage works, *Jeanne d'Arc au Bûcher* (1935), a "dramatic oratorio" (to words by Paul Claudel), is thought of as one of his finest works. In addition to his pieces written alone, he collaborated with Jacques Ibert on both an opera, *L'Aiglon* (1937), and an operetta. During this time period he also wrote *Danse de la*

Chèvre (1921), an essential piece of flute repertoire. Honegger had always remained in touch with Switzerland, his parents' country of origin, but with the outbreak of the war and the invasion of the Nazis, he found himself unable to leave Paris. He joined the French Resistance and was generally unaffected by the Nazis themselves, who allowed him to continue his work without too much interference. However, he was greatly depressed by the war. Between its outbreak and his death, he wrote his last four symphonies (numbers two to five) which are among the most powerful symphonic works of the 20th century. Honegger was widely known as a train enthusiast, and once notably said: "I have always loved locomotives passionately. For me they are living creatures and I love them as others love women or horses." His *mouvement symphonique Pacific 231* (a depiction of a steam locomotive) gained him early notoriety in 1923. The principal elements of Honegger's style are: Bachian counterpoint, driving rhythms, melodic amplitude, highly coloristic harmonies, an impressionistic use of orchestral sonorities, and a concern for formal architecture. His style is weightier and more solemn than that of his colleagues in *Les Six*. Far from reacting against German romanticism as the other members of *Les Six* did, Honegger's mature works show evidence of a distinct influence by it. Despite the differences in their styles, he and fellow *Les Six* member Darius Milhaud were close friends, having studied together at the Paris *Conservatoire*. Milhaud dedicated his fourth string quintet to Honegger's memory, while Francis Poulenc similarly dedicated his Clarinet Sonata.

Pastorale d'été, H. 31 (*Summer Pastoral*), is a short symphonic poem for chamber orchestra. It was inspired by Honegger's vacation in the Swiss Alps above Bern in 1920 and it was written in August 1920 at Wengen in Switzerland. It was Honegger's first orchestral work of any real consequence before he wrote his massive *Horace victorieux* in the winter of 1920-21. The score of *Pastorale d'été* was inscribed with an epigraph by Arthur Rimbaud: *J'ai embrassé l'aube d'été* (I have embraced the summer dawn). The scoring is for strings, single woodwinds, and horn. The work is atmospheric, placid and restrained, and has been described as "a latter-day" *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (*Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* by Claude Debussy). It seems to be a musical impression of a peaceful early morning in the Swiss Alps. It opens with a languorous soaring theme on the horn, which is then taken up by the strings. The instrumentation matches the pastoral nature of the theme and the mood in the outer sections. The middle section is livelier and is colourfully orchestrated. The main theme returns to close the piece in the same peaceful, manner of the opening. The work was dedicated to Alexis Roland-Manuel. It was first performed on 17 February 1921 in Paris, conducted by Vladimir Golschmann. The work also won a Prix Verley, a prize decided by the audience members.