

RICHARD BARTHÉLEMY: GOLD MEDALLIST IN THE FIRST OLYMPIC MUSIC COMPETITION AT STOCKHOLM 1912 — ENRICO CARUSO'S ACCOMPANIST



by Bernhard Kramer

There is a considerable amount of obscurity in the still insufficiently revealed landscape of the Olympic Art Competitions. They were held only seven times between 1912 and 1948 and many of the medal-winning works of art in architecture, literature, painting, sculpture or music remain unknown to us. By the same token, some biographies of the medalists are hidden in the mist of history.

The music competition at the Olympic Games of Stockholm 1912 has been especially enigmatic. Little is known about the details of this event. There is no record of the names of the jury. According to Wolf LYBERG the Swedes had assembled a special music commission, conducted by Prince Gustav ADOLF, who was at that time president of the Swedish choral associations.¹

We don't even know how many took part in the competitions. According to Richard STANTON² these musicians took part: Gustave DORET, Max D'OLLONE, Émile Jaques DALCROZE (all Switzerland), Ethel BARNARD (Great Britain) and two who remain (so far) unidentified. The winner's name Ricardo BARTHELEMY is not on the *Handwritten Registry of Musicians*.

At first all attempts to shed light on the Gold-medalist composer BARTHÉLEMY failed.

The difficulties start with the non-uniform spelling of his name: Ricardo BARTHELEMI³, Ricardo BARTHELEMY⁴, R. BARTHELEMY⁵, Riccardo BARTHELEMY⁶.

Further inquiry turned out to be complicated. The person of the composer remained enigmatic, also because he was one of the many "minor artists" in the history of the

Olympic Art Competitions. The most topical CD-Rom of the *Fondazione Levi* in Venice quoted some rare historic records (among others sung by Enrico CARUSO and Tito SCHIPA) by a composer BARTHÉLEMY. But biographical details were not available. No encyclopedia had the name, not even SCHMIDL (*Dizionario universale die Musici*, Mailand 1929). Ricardo BARTHÉLEMY seemed to be a phantom. But then the *Catalogue of Printed Music* showed a trace.⁷ Here, under the composer "*Barthélemy (Richard eight compositions)*" from 1906 until 1917 are listed, among them the march *Paris Frissons*, arranged by Max BROWN on the popular song by Rich[ar]d BARTHÉLEMY. Most probably this song was *Cupid's Hour*, an intermezzo for piano *Caresse des yeux* and *Visions blanches*, a melody for high voice and piano to words by BAUDELAIRE from the year 1912.

When listening to old shellack-records and studying Michael SCOTT's *The Record of Singing* the author stumbled across a mention of "*Barthélemy Richard*"⁸. Describing the tenor's Florencio CONSTANTINO'S recording of the song *Adorables tourments* SCOTT noticed "*by Caruso's accompanist Barthélemy*". After this discovery a biography of CARUSO was of further help.⁹

Richard BARTHÉLEMY (1869-1937?) came from French stock and was born in Smyrna/Turkey¹⁰. He received his musical education at the conservatory of *San Pietro a Majella* in Naples. He composed romances (*La rosa* und *Triste ritorno*), songs (*Chi se scorda cchiù* und *Pesca d'amore*) and even two operas.¹¹ The

¹ Letter to the author (01/04/2002).

² STANTON, R. "In Search, of the Artists of 1912", in: *Journal of Olympic History* 9(2001)2, p. 10.

³ HERMELIN, S./PETERSON, E., V. *Olympiska Spelen i Stockholm 1912 i bild och ord*, Stockholm 1912.

⁴ MEZÖ, F., *Geschichte der Olympischen Spiele*, München 1960; SWEDISH OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (ed.), *The Fifth Olympiad. The Official Report of the Olympic Games of Stockholm 1912*, Stockholm 1913.

⁵ *Revue Olympique* 12(1912)7.

⁶ KAMPER, E./MALLON, B., *Who is Who der Olympischen Spiele 1896-1992*, Kassel 1992; KLUGE, V., *Olympische Sommerspiele. Die Chronik I. Athen 1896 - Berlin 1936*, Berlin 1997.

⁷ BAILLE, E. L., (ed.), *The Catalogue of Printed Music in the British Library*, London 1980, vol. 4, p. 24.

⁸ SCOTT, M., *The Record of Singing to 1914*, London 1977.

⁹ GARGANO, P./CESARINI, G., *Caruso, Eine Biographie*, Zürich 1996, p. 158/159.

¹⁰ Richard Stanton in a letter to the author (26/01/2002).

¹¹ BARTHELEMY, R., *Memories of Caruso*, Plainsboro New Jersey 1979. [Translated by Constance S. Camner, Introduction by James Camner.]

existence of dramatic work (musical plays) is reported by James CAMNER in his introduction to BARTHÉLEMY'S booklet. But he does not give any further information or details. Perhaps he refers to two pantomimes (operettas) *Noël de Colombine* (on a text by PIVAS and PETITJEAN; First night Paris August 1901 Bodimère) and *Le Réveillon de Pierette* (Text Giovanni MAZZACORATI; First night New York August 1908 in the Plaza Hotel Salon).¹²

But historically his compositions are certainly less interesting than the fact that Richard BARTHÉLEMY (thus he names himself in his *Memories of Caruso*) was Enrico CARUSO'S "professor, répétiteur, accompanist and friend for fourteen years".¹³ According to CAMNER BARTHÉLEMY recorded his *Memories do Caruso* in 1925. The manuscript was virtually forgotten, until it was placed in auction in London 1977. *La Scala Autographs* purchased it and immediately realized the need for its publication. Two years later "A special limited edition of 500 copies was printed on rag paper and was the first printing in any language". It appeared in 1979 in New Jersey.

Even so the story of Richard BARTHÉLEMY remains incomplete. Richard STANTON informed the author of some puzzling facts. The *New York City Library* found for STANTON a short obituary notice for a certain "Lt. Colonel *Barthélemy*" (here again with accent) in *La Revue Musicale Belge* (05.11.1937). Here the musician was praised as director of *Solidra* (Free Radio Association) and founder of the *Tribune Radiophonique des Combattants*. All Belgian musicians owe BARTHÉLEMY thanks for his efforts in the rebirth of Belgian music.

However there are still doubts as to whether the musician, born in Turkey, competed in the Olympic Art competition for



Italy, toured the world with the great CARUSO and called himself a Frenchman and died in Belgium is one and the same person as the director of *Solidra*. Though there are considerable gaps in the composer's biography, we still can hear his music on record and strange to say we can listen to him playing the piano, (unfortunately not accompanying CARUSO). In about 1903 BARTHÉLEMY recorded arias and romances for the Paris Labor *Excelsior Reale* with the tenor Romeo BERTI. "In his recording of the terribly difficult *Ballata* by Mascagni he demonstrates that he was one of the greatest accompanists."¹⁴

CARUSO recorded two compositions of his accompanist: *Triste ritorno* (Recording date: 30/12/1906) and *Adorables tourments* (10/01/1908), both with orchestral accompaniment. These recordings are easily available on *Enrico Caruso. The Complete recordings. Volume 3* (Naxos Historical label AAD 8.110708). Here BARTHÉLEMY is found together with great composers like e.g. DONIZETTI, VERDI, LEONCAVALLO, PUCCINI, or BIZET.

CARUSO'S fame as the world's greatest singer has tended to overshadow his remarkable talent as a draughtsman and caricaturist. In 1907 he made this sketch of Richard BARTHÉLEMY.¹⁵

There are no records of Barthélemy's medal-winning composition. But a description in the *Revue Olympique* gives a vague idea of the march.

"Ce n'est pas diminuer le mérite de M. R. Barthelemy dont la Marche olympique présente des harmonies d'une savante simplicité que de gourmander les musiciens sur le peu de zèle qu'ils ont apporté cette première fois à concourir. Il ne s'est pas rencontré d'compétiteurs dignes d'être mis en balance avec lui et sans lui nous eussions proposé de ne point attribuer la médaille. Elle lui revient parce que son œuvre

¹² STIEGER, F., *Opernlexikon*, Tutzing 1977, [Teil II Komponisten, vol 1, p. 68 und Titeltatalog, vol 3, p. 1028].

¹³ BARTHELEMY, *Memories*, p. 1.

¹⁴ GARGANO/CESARINI, *Caruso*, p. 159.

¹⁵ The illustration is in: BARTHÉLEMY, *Memories*. James Camner found it in "Caruso's Caricatures", Dover, N.Y., 1977.

est vraiment belle et surtout en rapport avec la circonstance qui l'inspire. Cette dernière qualité est d'une grande importance car il ne suffit pas de donner un titre à des accords et à une mélodie quelconques, fussent-ils de premier choix, pour composer de la «musique sportive». Le terme est vague et c'est au musicien à lui donner un sens plus précis. De la musique sportive, c'est celle qui est susceptible d'encadrer, d'accompagner une manifestation sportive d'une façon propre à en souligner le caractère. Il y a des marches militaires de grande allure, il y a des chœurs d'opéras d'une superbe harmonie qui ne répondraient guère aux exigences d'une situation telle que, par exemple, la proclamation solennelle par le souverain, au centre d'un stade remplie de spectateurs de l'ouverture ou de la clôture d'une olympiade. De telles circonstances «ont une âme», s'il est permis de parler ainsi, une âme que le musicien peut s'efforcer de comprendre et de traduire en sonorités appropriées.¹⁶

[“It does not diminish the merits of Mr. Barthelemy whose Olympic March presents harmonies of a savage simplicity, for their little enthusiasm in this first competition. There were no competitors deserving of comparison with him and without his participation we would have suggested that the medal was not awarded at all. But it is due to him, because it is really beautiful and in complete accord with the circumstances which inspired it. This last quality is very important. For composing «musique sportive» it does not suffice to give a title to some chord or melody, even if it is of excellent quality. The concept of sporting music is vague and it is down to the musicians to define it. They should be able to establish the atmosphere of a sports meeting, accompany it appropriately and underline its character. There are military marches of great buoyancy and opera choruses of magnificent harmony which nonetheless would hardly match the requirements of e.g. the solemn opening or closing ceremony of the Olympic Games by the sovereign in the centre of a stadium filled with spectators. Such events have - if it is permitted to say so - "a soul", a soul the musician must try to understand and translate into the appropriate sonority.”¹⁷

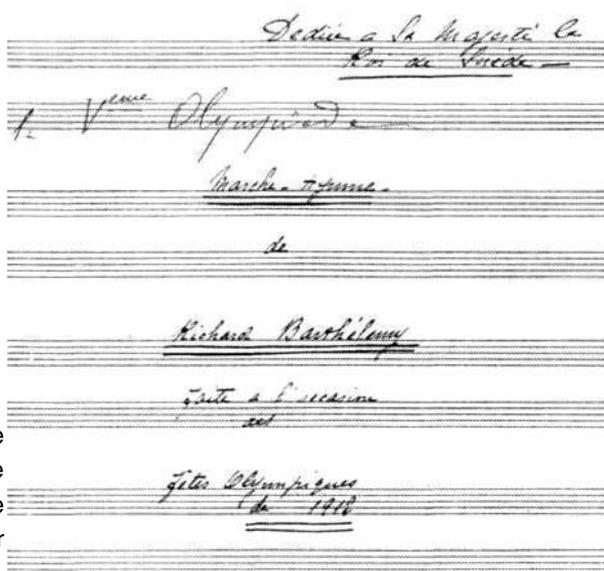
It is not known whether this excessive song of praise by the jury was based on the study of the orchestral score, the only genuine authority for any critical analysis, or if their appraisal rested on the piano version alone.

The author had almost given up hope ever to lay hands on the composition itself, when in May 2002 there was a letter from the *Historical Archive Service* of the *Olympic Museum* in Lausanne, including the handwritten piano score.¹⁸ As it bears BARTHÉLEMY'S signature it is beyond all doubt that it was written by the composer himself.

The composition, called *Marche-Hymne*, is dedicated to "Sa Majesté le Roi de Suède". The title-page bears the notice: "faite a l'occasion des Fêtes Olympiques de 1912".

The piano score comprises 116 bars and consists of eight parts of different length. The introduction is labelled "Maestoso" and "Molto marcato". It is followed by a second part of 18 bars: "Très solennel". In the third part "Tempo di Marcia" and "Molto ritmato" (from bar 31 on) the key changes from A to D and the time from 4/4 to 6/8, normally associated with a riding march. The 24 bars of this part are immediately repeated. The rhythmic introductory passage serves as a bridge passage to the repeated main theme ("Tres solennel"), before the composition is concluded with the doubled triplet-motif of the introduction ending effectively "forte rallentando assai prestissimo" with two conclusive bars.

The composer put his signature "Richard Barthélemy" (with accent) and the address "Avenue Victor Hugo - Paris" at the bottom of the score.



Title-page of Richard BARTHÉLEMY'S *Marche-Hymne* 1912

¹⁶ *Revue Olympique*, 12(1912)7, S. 106/107.

¹⁷ Translation B.K.

¹⁸ Many thanks to Mrs. Cristina Bianchi, Head of the *Historical Archives of the Olympic Museum*.