

Roy Howat and Chabrier

EMMANUEL CHABRIER (1841-1894)

Impromptu ('1^{er} Impromptu')

Ballabile

Caprice

Feuillet d'album

MAURICE RAVEL (1875-1937)

À la manière de... Chabrier

CHABRIER

Pièces pittoresques

II. Mélancolie

IV. Sous-bois

V. Mauresque

VI. Idylle

VIII. Improvisation

X. Scherzo-valse

Ayrshire-born pianist and author **Roy Howat**, Research Fellow at the RCS, has long been an ardent Chabrier champion (in which respect he joins a distinguished cast including Debussy, Ravel, Mahler, Albéniz, Falla, Poulenc and Stravinsky). Two chapters of Roy's book *The Art of French Piano Music* are devoted to the marvels of Chabrier's music. Roy's edition of Chabrier's collected piano music - which he has recorded and performed worldwide - is widely available in a Dover volume.

Tributes to Chabrier

'In Chabrier's *España* I see the beginning of all modern music.'

Gustav Mahler

'Chabrier still doesn't have the recognition he deserves, for all contemporary French music stems from his work. His role was as important as that of Manet in painting... in Manet's *Olympia*, I always had the feeling of rediscovering the essence of Chabrier's 'Mélancolie', simply transferred to another medium... [Personally,] I would rather have composed Chabrier's *Le Roi malgré lui* than the whole of Wagner's *Ring* cycle.'

Maurice Ravel

'I have no hesitation in declaring that Chabrier's *Pièces pittoresques* are as important for French music as Debussy's Preludes.'

'How often Ravel talked ecstatically to me about "Sous bois". For him it was one of the summits of Chabrier's output.'

'When I first heard "Idylle", I lost my head to it... Having gone into the Pathé [HMV] record listening booths one day in 1914, I put a coin in the slot and pressed the number to hear "Idylle". Even today [1961] I tremble with emotion at the memory of the ensuing miracle: a harmonic universe suddenly opened up before me and my music has never forgotten that first *baiser d'amour*.'

Francis Poulenc

'It is impossible to praise too highly the wit, charm and skill of this composer... Chabrier holds one's affection as the most genuinely French of all composers, the only writer to give us in music the genial rich humanity, the inspired commonplace, the sunlit solidity of the French genius that finds its greatest expression in the paintings of Manet and Renoir . . . He was the first important composer since Mozart to show that seriousness is not the same as solemnity, that profundity is not dependent upon length, that wit is not always the same as buffoonery, and that frivolity and beauty are not necessarily enemies.'

Constant Lambert

'So, as [Ravel's student] Roland-Manuel used to say, let's stop rediscovering Chabrier every twenty years. Let's put him once and for all in his true place, right at the top.'

Jean Françaix