Tracing the Lineage of Nadia Boulanger through Wind Repertoire

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Selected Quotes by Composers in the Boulanger Family Tree

Nadia Boulanger:

> One is not original because one does that which no one else does, but indeed, because he does in a unique and personal matter what others have done.
> - *Le Monde Musical*, April 1920, 155.

> The only thing you can do is try to understand a person and then discuss with him what he has not done. Really, you cannot develop or change anything in anybody. You can respect what he is and try to make him a true picture of himself.
> - Don Campbell, *Master Teacher: Nadia Boulanger*, 65.

> I hold for strict technique along with personal freedom, probably at a 50/50 ratio. I view the composer in relation to his national culture: for first there must be humanity or nothing worthwhile can be spoken. And in turn the composer must discourse in phrasing and in the rhetoric particular to himself. For he must be more than a musician; he must be strong in the knowledge of his own country. If he is not full grown in that respect at first, he must mature later or otherwise he will never be heard.
> - Campbell, 77.

> On the subject of the orchestra, note the tremendous development of instrumental technique, of orchestral virtuosity, the purity of colors. Each one takes on its own hue, as in painting, one juxtaposes red or blue.
> - *Le Monde Musical*, February 1926, 61.

Ned Rorem:

> So far as musical pedagogy is concerned – and by extension musical creation – Nadia Boulanger is the most influential person who ever lived."
> – Campbell, 3.

Leonard Bernstein said the following about his teacher, **Walter Piston**:

> Everything he [Piston] taught me has stuck – especially the example of his highly refined ear, and his non-pedantic approach to such academic subjects as fugue…I loved his own music (and still do) although I cannot say that I was particularly influenced by it stylistically (as I was by Copland) – except in the matter of the highest standards of craftsmanship and clarity of sonic intention.
> - Howard Pollack, *Harvard Composers: Walter Piston and His Students*, 105

Ingolf Dahl spoke about a "hierarchy of values" to CBDNA in the context of his *Sinfonietta.* He said:

> By the "hierarchy of values" that needs to be affirmed, I mean that the highest, the most important, the governing element in music is the element of pitch; that is, of line, of melody, and of melodic-motivic-thematic design (to be understood in the widest meaning of the term). Following it on the next lower level comes the element of harmonic design. At the bottom of the value scale in music is the element of tone color, of the "dressing up." What makes music great has always been the notes, and has never been the dressing-up, the glitter, the orchestration (no matter how much it contributes to the effect of the presentation of the musical idea).
> - Proceedings of the 13th National Conference of CBDNA.

In an address to CBDNA, **Ingolf Dahl** spoke about orchestration much like Boulanger. Dahl said to CBDNA in 1964 that the interplay of pure colors is the vital element in orchestration. He went on to say,

> One other detail in the orchestral treatment of the band sonority may be singled out: that is, the combination of similar colors simultaneously occurring in both foreground and background. It is what the painter would call different shadings of the same hue, as for example one kind of blue as background to another kind of blue. In terms of orchestration: half the clarinet section acts as background to the other half, or any other similar instruments as background or foreground against one another.
> - Proceedings of the 13th National Conference of CBDNA.

Bernard Rogers:

> To orchestrate is to paint. Both arts enlist color and line as expressive means. In both, the sensuous ingredient sharpens and deepens the artist's thought.
> - Bernard Rogers, *The Art of Orchestration*, vii.

Ross Lee Finney said the following about **Boulanger's** teaching:

> She had the conviction that there was a right way and a wrong way and that the composer's job was to find the right way. Even if we disagreed with what she thought was the right way, we all agreed that there was a right way for each individual composer and that it was up to him to find it.
> - Ross Lee Finney, *Profile of a Lifetime*, 50.

Stephen Gryc states the following about inspiration:

> The sounds of musical instruments themselves, as well as their intricate and specialized techniques, are a constant source of inspiration for the music I write. I must hear a melodic line as expressing the essence of an instrument, and it is the melodic line that then gives rise to the harmony and counterpoint, indeed, to the entire fabric of a composition.
> - http://uhaweb.hartford.edu/gryc

Daron Hagen commented in an interview in 1998:

> I have complete craft at this point in my life, so now I'm at the point where craft is not an issue; it's not *how* you say what you have to say, it's *what* you have to say. So the difference now is that I know exactly who my chosen audience is, how I wish to speak to them, and who I am.
> -www.daronhagen.com/new/articles/index

John Harbison believes that technique is the means by which expressive intent is conveyed. He stated the following:

> The dominating awareness of technique on the part of the listener is an indication the piece has not come across. Praise of craftsmanship is almost always a form of indifference, disappointment, or patronization. Craftsmanship, or technique, must be assumed; it is our business. If the listener's impression is dominated by it, it hasn't been subsumed by idea, it remains an undigested element. It is safe to say no composer ever failed through lack of technique, if a vital idea was present.
> - John Harbison, "Six Tanglewood Talks (4,5,6)," *Perspectives on New Music* (Fall-Winter 1985): 46.

Roy Harris said the following about **Boulanger**:

> She had the patience of an angel. She called me her autodidact and allowed me to go my own way. At the end of the first year I felt quite discouraged. I could not accept the European idea of discipline wherein one learns by exercising a system of formalized studies in harmony, counterpoint, and form. It all seemed to leave out the exercise of the most important element in a composer's equipment – the imagination.
> - Barbara Zuck, *A History of Musical Americanism*, 223.

Boulanger relayed the following in *Mademoiselle* about **Walter Piston,**

> He was gifted with an extraordinary delicacy, over and above his talent…His vocation was to teach, and he thought that in order to build on a solid basis he should go over everything, harmony, counterpoint, everything. At the beginning he didn't want to come to see me, because he didn't want to work with a woman; when he finally arrived, I said to him, 'I quite understand, I would have been as anxious as you, I would have gone to see a man at the outset, but here you are. So much the better,' And we became great friends.
> - Bruno Monsaingeon, *Mademoiselle: Conversations with Nadia Boulanger*, 73.

Bernard Rogers:
Frederick Koch stated the following about his teacher:

> In Rogers's teaching he dwelt on the power of design; the ideal of form, the importance of the 'total.' Yet, he also wanted us to know that everything was meaningful; that a single line, a rhythm, can make or enhance the beauty of a thought…Rogers passed this conscientiousness of architecture on to his students - in his teaching, Rogers questioned his students about their structural plan for their compositions.

Augusta Read Thomas:
When looking at music of other composers as a teacher, as well as an evaluator of scores sent to the Chicago Symphony, Augusta Read Thomas states the following:

> First of all, I would assume the following: excellent technique, fantastic notation, incredible musicianship, wonderful "ears," all of that is assumed. Well, before that, in a way, one would look for honesty, passion, integrity, flair, integration, balance, beauty, individuality. There are a lot of different things.
> - www.augustareadthomas.com/perkins.html

About teaching she says

> If you really teach well, you really get into the music and into the philosophy behind the music, and the students' knowledge of the repertoire, and the tradition and the context in which they're creating their piece and so on and so forth... I don't teach to make a bunch of Little Augustas.
> - www.augustareadthomas.com/perkins.html

Richard Toensing:
Ross Lee Finney advised Toensing to "be aware of your roots" as he composed. He also said,

> What I'm going to teach you is craft. I don't teach inspiration because the day will come when you don't have inspiration and you will still have to write.
> - Richard Toensing, interview by Karen Fannin, 15 April 2004.