

followup to *High, Low, and in Between*, this includes two of Van Zandt's most recorded songs, "Pancho and Lefty" and "If I Needed You." It also features covers of songs by Guy Clark and Hank Williams. Van Zandt plays no guitar, only piano.

**Live at the Old Quarter, Houston, Texas.** Recorded in 1973, this album perfectly captures Van Zandt in performance. The Old Quarter was one of the first places Van Zandt ever performed and a favorite haunt of his. All of the songs feature Van Zandt solo with his acoustic guitar.

**The Highway Kind.** Released in 1997 only three months after Van Zandt's death, this was recorded on tour in the United States and Europe. Featuring new and old material and some covers, the disc is at once depressing and light, as only Van Zandt can be. Some critics commented that the performances here were the songs of a man weary beyond his years. The backing band is, as usual, almost perfect in its approach to the nuances of Van Zandt's performance.

### Musical Legacy

Van Zandt was one of those rare artists whose legacy began almost as soon as he recorded an album. His song's stories of ironic tragedy became the favorite of critics and musicians almost as soon as they were heard. Like Dylan on a smaller scale, his singing style remains unique despite the efforts of others to imitate it. Country musicians such as Merle Haggard, Willie Nelson, and Emmylou Harris have recorded his songs, as well as those identified more with Americana music, such as Steve Earle.

Ron Jacobs

### Further Reading

Kruth, John. *To Live's to Fly: The Ballad of the Late Great Townes Van Zandt*. Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 2007. Kruth's posthumous biography utilizes interviews with friends and family and articles and interviews written by others to provide a detailed and realistic account of Van Zandt's life and music. He also includes perceptive readings of Van Zandt's songs and performances.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Townes Van Zandt: The Self-Destructive Hobo Saint." *Sing Out* (Summer, 2004): 54-62. This article in a folksingers' magazine discusses

Van Zandt's bouts with depression and his friendships with other musicians. Makes the claim that one day Van Zandt will be recognized as one of America's best twentieth century poets.

Tom, Luke. "Songs like Voices from Beyond the Grave." *The Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 2003, p. D8. Keenly observant discussion of Van Zandt, with highlights of his career and his influence on his peers.

Zollo, Paul. "Townes Van Zandt." In *Songwriters on Songwriting*. Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 2003. Among interviews with dozens of modern songwriters is one with Van Zandt that provides an intimate look at his creative process.

**See also:** Dylan, Bob; Earle, Steve; Haggard, Merle; Harris, Emmylou; Hopkins, Lightnin'; Lovett, Lyle; Nelson, Willie.

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## Edgard Varèse

### French classical composer

*A visionary composer, Varèse created musical works that demonstrated a remarkably organic integration of electronic and acoustic materials.*

**Born:** December 22, 1883; Paris, France

**Died:** November 6, 1965; New York, New York

**Also known as:** Edgard Victor Achille Charles Varèse (full name)

### Principal works

ORCHESTRAL WORKS: *Un grand sommeil noir*, 1906; *Offrandes*, 1922; *Hyperprism*, 1923; *Octandre*, 1924; *Intégrales*, 1925; *Amériques*, 1926; *Arcana*, 1927; *Ionisation*, 1933; *Ecuatorial*, 1934; *Density 21.5*, 1936; *Étude pour Espace*, 1947; *Déserts*, 1954; *La Procession de Vergès*, 1955; *Poème électronique*, 1958; *Nocturnal*, 1961.

### The Life

Edgard Victor Achille Charles Varèse (EHD-gahr VEE-tohr ah-KEEL shahr! vah-REH-zeh) was born in Paris on December 22, 1883, and he was raised in Burgundy and northern Italy before returning to Paris as a young adult. His childhood

was difficult, in particular, his relationship with his father, which resulted in the relocations during his youth. Varèse began his musical training at the Schola Cantorum in 1904, and he continued his studies at the Paris Conservatory the following year. In 1907 he moved to Berlin, where he met and married actress Suzanne Bing. Their short-lived marriage produced a daughter, Claude, in 1910. In 1915, after a stint in the French army during World War I, Varèse emigrated to the United States, attaining American citizenship in 1927.

Almost immediately upon his arrival in the United States, Varèse found fertile ground for his musical pursuits. The title of the first work he composed in the United States, *Amériques*, not only paid homage to his newly adopted home but also was a reference to the metaphorical new world of sound that he was beginning to explore during this period.

Along with harpist-composer Carlos Salzedo, Varèse founded the International Composers Guild in 1921, the manifesto of which included a well-known phrase associated with Varèse: "The present-day composer refuses to die." In 1928 Varèse returned to Paris to work for several years, during which time his interest in electronic music began to grow as he investigated ways of developing and incorporating electronic instruments in his music. Varèse was the first major composer to use the newly invented theremin, an electronic instrument, in his work *Ecuatorial*, which was premiered by Nicolas Slonimsky in April, 1934. Upon his subsequent return to the United States, Varèse lived in Santa Fe, New Mexico; San Francisco; and Los Angeles before returning to New York City in 1938.

Throughout his life, Varèse enjoyed associations with major literary and artistic figures, including Le Corbusier, Henry Miller, Alexander Calder, Joán Miró, Joseph Stella, Fernand Léger, Romain Rolland, Man Ray, and Marcel Duchamp. In 1918 Varèse married Louise McCutcheon Norton, an established literary figure who was later recognized for her English translations of French literature, most notably that of Arthur Rimbaud. Throughout their life together, Louise was an important collaborator and supporter of her husband, and the two remained extremely close until the composer's death nearly fifty years later.

Frustrated by unrealized projects that depended upon electronic resources that were either unavail-

able or not yet developed, Varèse entered a long period of compositional dormancy from the late 1930's through the early 1950's. Among the ambitious projects he attempted during this period was *Espace*, a multilingual choral work requiring radio-phonetic synchronization of simultaneous performances in New York City, Paris, Moscow, and Beijing. While such a work would be entirely possible in an age of satellite feeds and Internet communication, just conceiving of such a work at that time is a testament to Varèse's remarkable vision.

The advent of new technology following World War II reinvigorated Varèse, and such developments allowed him to continue his musical pursuits as he had envisioned them decades earlier. It was during this final stage of Varèse's life that he began to achieve the recognition he deserved, including an invitation to join the Royal Swedish Academy (1962) and the receipt of a Koussevitzky International Recording Award (1963). Varèse died in New York City on November 6, 1965, just short of his eighty-second birthday.

### The Music

**Early Influences.** Varèse's initial musical training was fairly traditional, his teachers including such mainstream French composers as Albert Roussel and Charles Widor. Additional studies with Ferruccio Busoni during his formative years established an early interest in sound for its own sake and in the use of unusual sounds as the basis of his compositions. Varèse's early musical style is difficult to assess, as the only extant work from his youth is a setting of Paul Verlaine's poem *Un grand sommeil noir*, composed in 1906. The remaining works from this period were either lost, destroyed in a Berlin warehouse fire, or (in the case of the symphonic poem *Bourgogne*) destroyed by the composer's own hand.

Because of his unique approach to musical sound and the emphasis on noise elements, Varèse is often associated with the Futurist movement, which originated in Italy prior to World War I and was musically defined by Luigi Russolo's manifesto *The Art of Noises* (1913). Among the most significant influences on Varèse's concept of music were the writings of nineteenth century Polish philosopher and mathematician Józef Maria Hoene-Wronski, whose definition of music as "the corpo-

realization of the intelligence that is in sound" would become the touchstone of Varèse's compositional philosophy. In order to avoid the historical and aesthetic baggage associated with the word music, Varèse referred to his work as "organized sound" and to himself as a "worker in rhythms, frequencies, and intensities" rather than as a composer.

**Amériques to Arcana.** Perhaps Varèse's most productive compositional period was during the time he cofounded the International Composers Guild in the early 1920's, when he composed *Amériques*, *Offrandes*, *Hyperprism*, *Octandre*, and *Intégrales*. In addition to the orchestral work *Arcana*, completed later in the decade, these works established Varèse's mature style, which remained unusually consistent throughout the remainder of his life.

An important characteristic of his compositional style is the careful attention to all musical parameters. Varèse became increasingly interested in musical elements that had been previously subjugated

by pitch concerns—timbre, density, register, texture, dynamics—and his works reflected this shift by emphasizing percussion and wind instruments, particularly those that allowed him to explore registral and dynamic extremes (such as piccolo, E-flat clarinet, contrabass trombone, tuba). While string instruments were reduced to a supportive role (mostly for coloristic and percussive effects) in *Amériques*, he eventually eliminated them altogether from many of his ensemble works because of their strong association with what he perceived as an outmoded Romanticism inherent to their style of playing. The one exception to this was the contrabass, which Varèse found useful in extending the low end of the ensemble in his chamber work *Octandre*.

**Ionisation and Density 21.5.** Varèse was fascinated by scientific phenomena and mathematical formulas, but he approached these ideas philosophically or conceptually rather than literally in his works. This interest is clearly exemplified in titles such as *Ionisation* for percussion ensemble, *Density 21.5* for solo flute (named for the density of platinum, as the work was originally composed for a platinum flute), and *Hyperprism* for winds and percussion. Even his explanation of musical processes seems more appropriate to a science journal than a theory text, incorporating phrases such as "shifting planes," "colliding sound-masses," "penetration and repulsion," and "transmutation." When listening to Varèse's work, such descriptions seem entirely apt, as his approach to sound is so effectively derived from these conceptual models. Completed in 1931 and premiered by an ensemble conducted by Slonimsky at Carnegie Hall in 1933, *Ionisation* is significant for being the first work written exclusively for percussion ensemble. Because the piece is composed primarily for indefinitely pitched instruments (with the exception of chimes and piano, which are used only in the coda), Varèse was able to focus almost entirely on other musical elements in the unfolding of sonic blocks. *Density 21.5* presents a contrasting listening experience: Composed for flutist Georges Barrère in 1936, this is the only monophonic work in Varèse's catalogue, demonstrating the composer's approach to linear pitch and rhythmic development with a relatively limited use of timbral and dynamic materials because of the nature of the instrument. In spite of the inher-



Edgard Varèse. (Library of Congress)

ent restrictions of a single-line instrument, Varèse uses contrasting pitch materials and extreme registral placement to create a polyphonic effect.

**Déserts and Poème électronique.** During the final decade of his life, Varèse produced his seminal electronic works, following years of unsuccessful attempts to realize his musical vision. Completed in 1954, *Déserts* is structured as a set of episodes that alternate music for a large ensemble of wind and percussion instruments with purely electronic sounds. Although the separation of acoustic and electronic forces in this composition would seem to argue against integration, the musical material and the similarity of developmental processes within each section result in a cohesive and organic work. *Poème électronique* was created at the insistence of architect Le Corbusier, who designed the Philips Pavilion for the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels, Belgium. Varèse composed this purely electronic work as part of an installation within the pavilion, using more than four hundred loudspeakers that enabled the sound to be physically projected through space, a radical concept at the time. Varèse's final composition was *Nocturnal*, a setting of texts by Anaïs Nin for solo soprano, male chorus, and orchestra.

### Musical Legacy

Largely underappreciated during his lifetime, Varèse has since his death had a profound influence on new generations of composers. He has come to be considered by many as an important and original voice, and his relatively small catalog—less than twenty extant compositions—is notable for the uncompromising quality and significance of each work. Works such as *Ionisation*, *Density 21.5*, and *Poème électronique* are established in the contemporary classical repertoire, and they receive regular performances in professional and academic settings. Other works are performed less frequently, primarily because of the unusual personnel requirements or practical difficulties involved.

Varèse's consistent and inherently musical approach to electronic music sets him apart from other early practitioners working in that medium, many of whom seemed more concerned with technical issues than musical ones. As a result, the electronic materials in *Déserts* and *Poème électronique*, while admittedly dated, sound less so than works

by Varèse's contemporaries. These works also demonstrate an organic integration of electronic and acoustic materials to a degree that is unique for the time, and which has served as an important model for subsequent generations of electronic music composers. Although his importance is particularly notable among composers within the experimental classical tradition, such as Pierre Boulez, John Cage, Iannis Xenakis, Chou Wen-chung, and Roger Reynolds, Varèse also influenced jazz legend Charlie Parker, guitarist and postmodern composer Frank Zappa, and the rock band Pink Floyd. Varèse was commemorated in a 2006 exhibit at the Tinguely Museum in Basel, Switzerland, titled "Edgard Varèse: Composer, Sound Sculptor, Visionary."

Joseph Klein

### Further Reading

- Bernard, Jonathan. *The Music of Edgard Varèse*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987. Bernard's exploration of Varèse's work is innovative and insightful, taking into account the composer's unique approach to texture, timbre, and register in his application of analytical tools.
- Meyer, Felix, and Heidi Zimmermann. *Edgard Varèse: Composer, Sound Sculptor, Visionary*. Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell and Brewer, 2006. An important collection of facsimile scores, letters, art reproductions, and essays by dozens of leading American and European scholars, including Jonathan Bernard, David Schiff, Kyle Gann, and Chou Wen-chung. Based on a major 2006 exhibition of Varèse's life and work associated with the Paul Sacher Foundation in Basel, Switzerland.
- Nattiez, Jean-Jacques. "Varese's *Density 21.5*: A Study in Semiological Analysis." *Music Analysis* 1, no. 3 (October, 1982): 243-340. Translated by Anna Barry. This extensive and controversial analysis of the composer's most frequently performed work sheds light on his distinctive compositional process, particularly with regard to motivic transformation.
- Ouellette, Fernand. *Edgard Varèse*. Translated by Derek Coltman. London: Calder and Boyars, 1973. The first major biography about the composer was originally published in French in 1968, just a few years after his death. The book includes a great deal of information, and it is di-

vided into chapters devoted to significant milestones in Varèse's life.

Varèse, Edgard. "The Liberation of Sound." In *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, edited by Elliot Schwartz and Barney Childs. New York: Da Capo Press, 1998. This collection of lectures presented by Varèse between 1936 and 1959 was compiled and edited by his closest pupil, Wen-chung, and it is perhaps the most direct and cogent presentation of the composer's conceptual, aesthetic, and technical approach to organized sound.

Varèse, Louise. *Varèse: A Looking Glass Diary*. Vol. 1. London: Davis-Poynter, 1972. The first of a proposed two-volume journal by the composer's widow (the second volume was incomplete at the time of her death in 1989). The book presents an extensive narrative account of events from Varèse's early life as well as rare photographs, correspondence, and personal insights unavailable elsewhere.

**See also:** Adams, John; Babbitt, Milton; Boulez, Pierre; Busoni, Ferruccio; Cage, John; Carter, Elliott; Chávez, Carlos; Dodge, Charles; Dolphy, Eric; Feldman, Morton; Parker, Charlie; Seeger, Ruth Crawford; Still, William Grant; Theremin, Léon; Xenakis, Iannis; Zappa, Frank.

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## Sarah Vaughan

### American jazz singer

*With her exceptional range and pitch control, her instinct for harmony and improvisation, and her phrasing, Vaughan elevated the role of the jazz vocalist to a level equal to other performers in the jazz bands of the 1940's.*

**Born:** March 27, 1924; Newark, New Jersey

**Died:** April 3, 1990; Hidden Hills, California

**Also known as:** Sarah Lois Vaughan (full name); Sassy; Divine One

### Principal recordings

**ALBUMS:** *I'll Wait and Pray*, 1944 (with Billy Eckstine); *It Might as Well Be Spring*, 1946 (with

John Kirby); *It's Magic*, 1947; *Mean to Me*, 1950; *Divine Sarah Sings*, 1954; *Lullaby of Birdland*, 1954; *Rodgers and Hart Songbook*, 1954; *Sarah Vaughan with Clifford Brown*, 1954; *The George Gershwin Songbook, Vol. 1*, 1955; *The George Gershwin Songbook, Vol. 2*, 1955; *In the Land of Hi-Fi*, 1955; *Sassy*, 1956; *At Mister Kelly's*, 1957; *The Irving Berlin Songbook*, 1957; *Sarah Vaughan Sings George Gershwin*, 1957; *Sarah Vaughan Sings Great Songs from Hit Shows*, 1957; *Swingin' Easy*, 1957; *Broken-Hearted Melody*, 1958; *No Count Sarah*, 1958; *Vaughan and Violins*, 1959; *Dreamy*, 1960; *After Hours*, 1961; *The Divine One*, 1961; *Sarah + 2*, 1961; *Sarah Vaughan*, 1961; *You're Mine You*, 1962; *Sarah Sings Soulfully*, 1963; *Sarah Slightly Classical*, 1963; *Sassy Swings the Tivoli*, 1963; *Snowbound*, 1963; *The Lonely Hours*, 1964; *Sweet 'n' Sassy*, 1964; *Sarah Vaughan Sings the Mancini Songbook*, 1965; *Viva! Vaughan*, 1965; *The New Scene*, 1966; *Sassy Swings Again*, 1967; *A Time in My Life*, 1971; *With Michel Legrand*, 1972; *Send in the Clowns*, 1974; *I Love Brazil*, 1977; *How Long Has This Been Going On?*, 1978; *Copacabana*, 1979; *The Duke Ellington Songbook, Vol. 1*, 1979; *The Duke Ellington Songbook, Vol. 2*, 1979; *Songs of the Beatles*, 1981; *Crazy and Mixed Up*, 1982; *The Mystery of Man*, 1984; *Brazilian Romance*, 1987; *Deep Purple*, 1990.

### The Life

Sarah Lois Vaughan (vahn), daughter of Asbury and Ada Vaughan, was born in 1924 in Newark, New Jersey. As a young girl, she played piano and sang in the choir of the Mount Zion Baptist Church. Along with taking piano lessons, she majored in music at Newark's Arts High School. More important, she spent her teenage years listening to recordings of jazz and blues artists, skipping school to seek out performances in Newark's many clubs and theaters. By the age of fifteen, she was playing and singing in local clubs.

In 1943 Vaughan competed in an amateur contest at Harlem's Apollo Theater. She attracted the attention of popular singer Billy Eckstine and bandleader Earl Hines. At the age of eighteen, her professional career was launched when Hines hired her to play piano and sing in his band. Touring with the Hines band was her training