

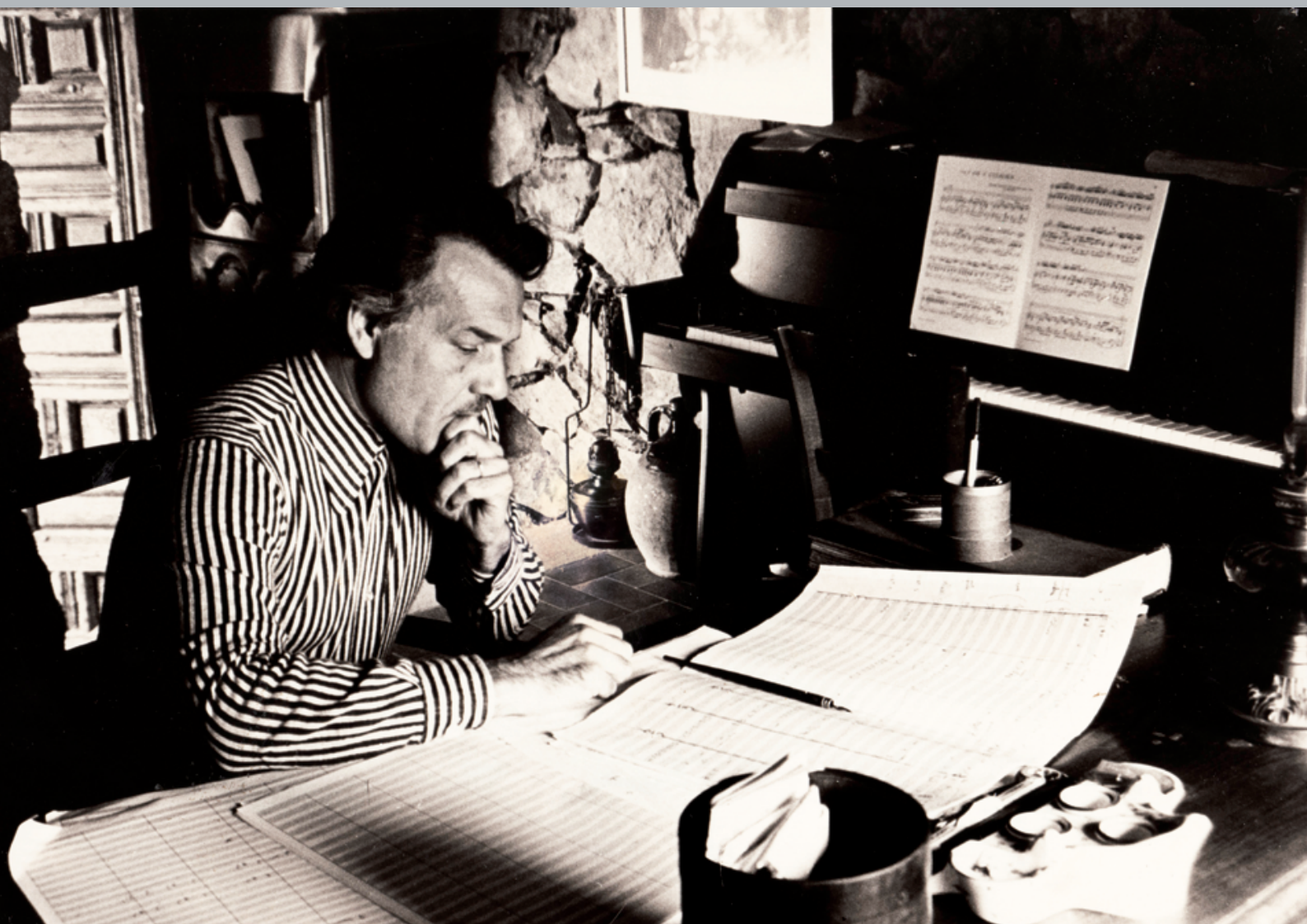
PIERRE ARVAY

C O M P O S E R

"I have faith in music.

I have set my sights on a goal and, in order to achieve it, I will take from every colour on the palette and every sound in the language."

Pierre Arvay (excerpt from an interview for the magazine *De Luxe*, December 1962)



Pierre Arvay was born on 21 October in Turin, in the North of Italy.

His father, Joska Arvay (1898-1951), was a Hungarian virtuoso violinist who was born in Szarvaskend (a little village in the west of Hungary). In the middle of the First World War, as a young first violinist at the imperial court of Austria-Hungary, it seemed that one day he refused to play the *March of the kings*, which contradicted his communist ideas of the time... Ordered to leave the country, he took refuge in Italy. It was in Turin, however, where he was giving a concert, that he met Maria Galli, who he married in 1923.

Maria (1902-1994) had been born in Turin and still lived there. She played the piano in the family cinema, accompanying screenings of silent films, or entertaining the audience between two showings. They had six children together: Pierre, Renée, Albine, Jean, Liliane (who died very young of whooping-cough) and Raymond. The three brothers shared their father's musical talents and became musicians.

Shortly after Pierre was born, the family left Italy and moved to France to settle in Marseille, Cannes and then Nice where things went well for them: Joska performed a lot and the casino in which he had put his savings seemed to be a good investment.

MARIA AND JOSKA ARVAY
WITH THEIR FIRST TWO CHILDREN,
PIERRE AND LITTLE RENÉE
(AT A PHOTOGRAPHER'S STUDIO, AROUND 1928).



The financial crisis of 1929 unfortunately changed the situation as it caused, among other things, a considerable decrease in tourism, which provided the casino's main source of revenue. The business slowly foundered and Joska lost everything.

In 1933, he decided to start again in Paris, where the family, after lodging for a while in a hotel, set up home in Montmartre (Rue de l'Orient, now called Rue de l'Armée d'Orient, Paris XVIII).

Joska played the violin in various cabarets where gypsy music was played, especially the Drap d'or (Rue de Bassano, Paris VIII); he also performed on the radio, in Paris and abroad. These activities caused Joska to leave home and live a separate life, often leaving his wife and children.

The atmosphere in the family was difficult and there were frequent arguments; Pierre wanted to escape the role of head of the family which fell to him as the eldest. He often sought refuge at the home of a neighbour, Madame Faverot, the wife of the painter Joseph Faverot. She was a very cultivated woman and shared with him her knowledge of literature and art.

In 1940, at the age of fifteen, Pierre decided to leave his family and move in with her. This "abandonment" weighed heavily on him for a long time and as an adult he kept close to his family, for example by giving them material help when his professional situation allowed.

JOSKA ARVAY (STANDING ON THE RIGHT) AND HIS ORCHESTRA (PARIS, IN THE YEARS 1930-1940).



His friend Madame Faverot introduced him to the pianist and teacher Jean Batalla. He took Pierre under his wing, encouraging him to work at the piano and study the classics. This informal teaching allowed him to acquire real musical knowledge and to take part in Henri Büsser's composition classes.

Alongside these studies, Pierre joined the Resistance in 1943 (several times Mentioned in Despatches). For a few years he worked in a great variety of jobs, from dishwasher in a bistrot in Pigalle to pianist in a bar, as well as « ghost-writer » for a famous arranger of tangos.

In 1948, a successful audition for Paris Inter (now France Inter) enabled him to join that radio station and compose music for various broadcasts, including several by Gérard Sire.

In the same year he met Dolores Gonzalez-Lucas, known as Lola, the daughter and granddaughter of French organ builders Fernand and Victor Gonzalez. They were married in Paris on 11 May 1950, as soon as they could resolve administrative problems linked to the war. Their first daughter, Danielle, was born on 14 August 1949; then Catherine on 16 July 1952. Until 1955 they lived in the apartment of the maternal grandparents of Lola (Rue Albert Sorel, Paris XIV), where the grandparents lived, as well as Lola's mother, step-father, brother and two sisters. Pierre Arvay's mother also moved in there when her husband died in 1951.



PIERRE ARVAY ON THE COVER
OF THE MAGAZINE
LA SEMAINE RADIO-PHONIQUE
(THE ISSUE OF 29/08/1948).

LOLA ARVAY (BRUNOY, 1955).

At the end of 1948, still on Paris Inter, Pierre Arvay was on the air in short programmes such as *Piano jazz, par Pierre Arvay* (Piano jazz, by Pierre Arvay). The regular programme *Un quart d'heure avec Pierre Arvay* (Fifteen minutes with Pierre Arvay) which, according to circumstances, could be *Une demi-heure* (Half an hour) or *Dix minutes* (Ten minutes) was launched in 1949: he played on the piano songs, musical standards or some of his compositions. He also presented the programme *Pierre Arvay dans ses improvisations* (Pierre Arvay and his improvisations), in which he played on the piano well-known musical pieces which he adapted into another genre: "jazz style", "tango style", etc. This radio period, which continued until the middle of the 1950s, enabled him to work with great figures such as André Popp and Jean-Michel Pontramier.

In addition to his work on the airwaves, Pierre Arvay began to write songs, intended for performance in cabarets, or live on the radio. He composed more than 150 between 1948 and 1958, often under the pseudonym of Jean-Claude Roc, with writers such as Jean Lambertie, Michel Vaucaire, Gérard Sire, André Colomer, Henry Lemarchand and Maurice Korb (who wrote under the name of Marc Maurice at that time). Several of these songs were also recorded, by artistes including Lucienne Boyer, Yves Montand, François Deguelt, Annie Cordy, Michèle Arnaud and Jacques Douai. Pierre Arvay's first 78 RPM records came out in 1949-1950, mainly on the Saturne label, which specialised in illustrated records known as "picture discs".



SOME SONG SCORES BY PIERRE ARVAY AND A SATURNE
« PICTURE DISC », WITH PIERRE ARVAY IN THE PHOTO.



Also in 1949, he ventured into a new sphere of the musical world when he assisted Suzy Lebrun with the artistic direction of L'Échelle de Jacob (Rue Jacob, Paris VI), an establishment she had just opened and which soon became one of the key literary cabarets on the Left Bank.

Pierre Arvay had known Suzy Lebrun since 1948, and had already assisted her in the artistic direction of her previous cabaret Le Tam Tam (Rue d'Assas, Paris VI). But it was at L'Échelle de Jacob that his career really took a leap forward as it was there he invited and accompanied on the piano great names from the musical scene of the time, such as Cora Vaucaire, Jacques Brel, Jacques Douai, René-Louis Lafforgue, Francis Lemarque, Léo Ferré and François Deguelt.

During this period, Pierre Arvay continued composing, especially classical works: from 1951 to 1953, his *Prélude et Toccata* went to Malaysia, India and China, on one of the tours of the pianist Germaine Mounier. In December 1951, his ballet *Le Lys et la rose* (libretto by Henri Laude) was performed at the Opéra in Nice.

He left L'Échelle de Jacob around 1953, tired of that nocturnal lifestyle. Times were difficult then but he could still always count on the support of his wife's mother and



PIERRE ARVAY OUTSIDE THE L'ÉCHELLE DE JACOB CABARET
(PARIS, AROUND 1950).



LOLA AND PIERRE ARVAY IN NICE,
BEFORE ONE OF THE PERFORMANCES
OF HIS BALLET *LE LYS ET LA ROSE* (1951).

maternal grandparents. He played the piano during the day in cabarets and once more wrote songs, an activity that he gave up in the early 1960: "There is too much trickery [Editor's note: in that milieu]", he told a journalist in an interview in 1961.

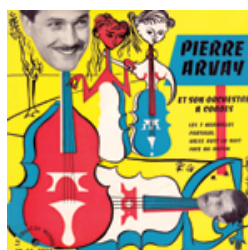
He only returned to this within the field of songs for children, composing for the cartoon *Aglaé et Sidonie* (first broadcast in 1969).

In 1954, he began a collaboration of several years with the production company SPART, which enabled him to write the music for numerous advertising films, by Jean Mineur among others.

Around 1955, with the Arvay family now living in their own apartment at Brunoy in the Essonne area (Rue du Réveillon), Pierre Arvay joined the Chant du Monde label as a composer, orchestrator and arranger; here he still occasionally used the pseudonym of Jean-Claude Roc. For the Sidéral brand, produced by Le Chant du Monde, Pierre Arvay often arranged and orchestrated under the name of David Prieston. He then recorded and accompanied artistes such as Arletty, Aimé Doniat, Xavier Depraz and others. Records became more and more frequent; Pierre Arvay was now famous.

SIDÉRAL AND
LE CHANT DU MONDE RECORDS.

PIERRE ARVAY AND ARLETTY IN REHEARSAL (1956).



The Chant du Monde experience was not to last long as the Teppaz company, which pioneered portable record players, offered him a place in 1958 in its recently created musical section and invited him to produce and record any music he would like to write, with no constraints of genre or format. He accepted and also became the principal orchestrator and arranger for other artistes on the label, sometimes using the pseudonym of Peter Mills.

This freedom notably allowed him to bring out his first record of library music, *Musiques de scènes*. This 33 RPM record was the first of its kind in France, England having been until then the main European country to produce library music. This record was so successful that Pierre Arvay went on to compose a second volume, with tracks that were once again used extensively by French Radio and Television.

Pierre Arvay also composed several classical works: his *Sonate pour ondes Martenot et piano*, for example, was pressed in 1958. He was very interested in the unusual sound of the ondes Martenot, considered one of the first electronic musical instruments, and he composed several pieces for them and used them in some of his orchestrations. But it was above all his *Images Symphoniques* which brought fame to the classical composer and gave him a place in several public performances, in Paris at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées or the Salle Gaveau, and in the provinces. This record from 1960 was one of the first which was entirely devised, composed and orchestrated for stereo, a new recording technique at the time. A mono version was also put on the market, as record players that could play stereo records were not very common at that time.

SCORE OF THE *SONATE POUR ONDES MARTENOT & PIANO* AND TEPPAZ RECORDS.



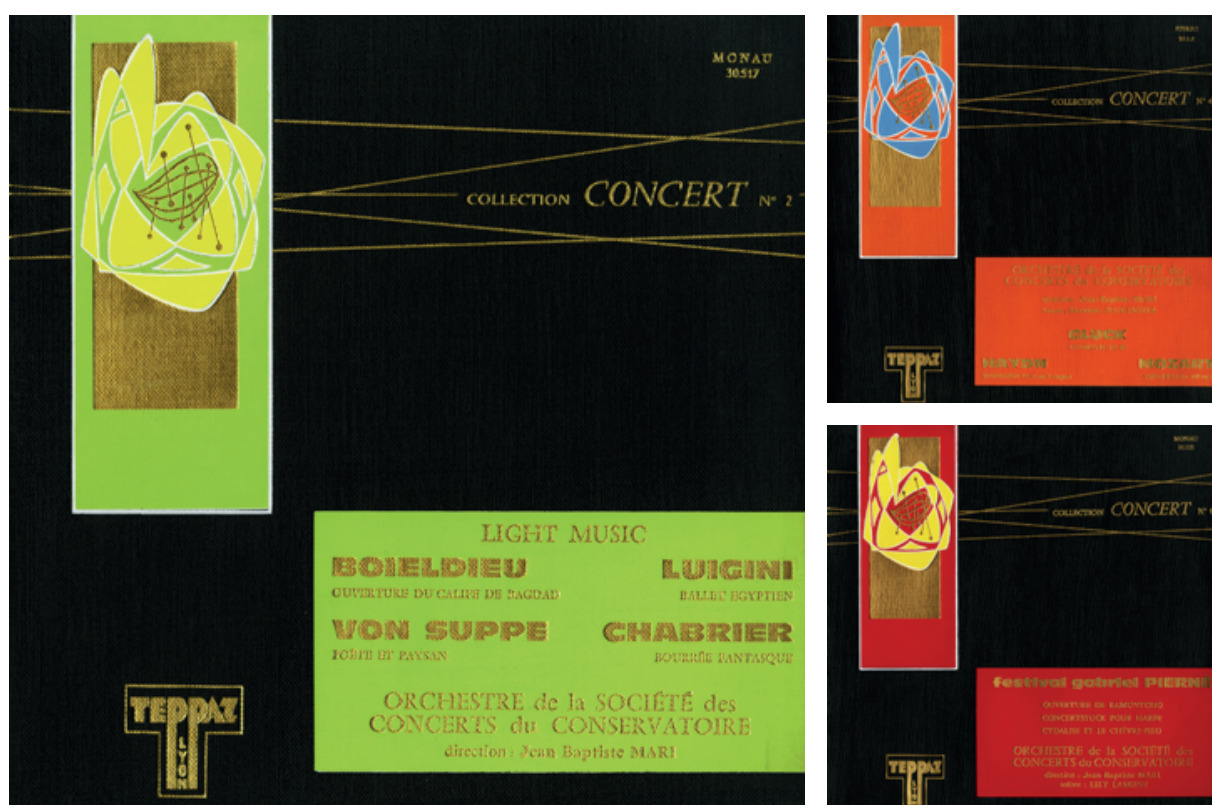
Pierre Arvay also took over the artistic direction of certain collections of Teppaz records, in particular in the Classical Music section whose fame was assured when he created the collection called *Concert*, in 1961. For the first time, several classical composers appeared on the same record, each providing a different part of the “concert”: overture, concerto, then symphony or symphonic poem. For this work Pierre Arvay gathered together great soloists, such as the harpist Lily Laskine or the trumpet player Maurice André, directed by conductor Jean-Baptiste Mari.

Concert n° 6, Festival Gabriel Pierné won the Grand Prix National 1963 of the Académie du disque français.

In 1961 Lola and Pierre Arvay bought a house at Brunoy (Rue des Vallées), a town they had lived in for six years.

In the same year, following the growing renown of his works in the field of library music, Pierre Arvay was approached by two people with whom he established a partnership which lasted until the end of his life: James De Wolfe and Pierre Bellemare.

SOME TEPPAZ RECORDS FROM THE COLLECTION *CONCERT*.



James De Wolfe directed Music De Wolfe (which became De Wolfe Music in the middle of the 1980s), a British label with worldwide circulation, which specialised in cinematographic, televisual, radio and theatre soundtracks. He wanted Pierre Arvay to compose for his company: the first record from this collaboration, the first of a long line, came out in 1961. These records were only available within the world of stock music.

Then Pierre Bellemare, producer and presenter, asked Pierre Arvay to write all the music for his new television show, *Le Bon numéro*, first broadcast on 17 January 1962. At the same time, Pierre Arvay joined the Técipress company (TÉLÉ/CInéma/PRESSe), founded by Pierre Bellemare several years earlier, and he created a musical section for them. He was the director of this until his death, except for a break between 1972 and 1975 when the composer Jacky Giordano took his place. This section provided, among other things, the musical sources for countless radio and television broadcasts. Pierre Arvay composed more than 550 pieces for this (waltzes, dixieland, foxtrots, boleros, biguines, etc.), often under the pseudonyms of Jean-Claude Roc and Cham Staker.

Other composers gradually joined him: his brother, Raymond Arvay (who also composed under the names of Raymond Detouard and Olivier Natal), his friend, the saxophonist Roger Simon (who also used the pseudonym of Ludovic Decosne), and Jacques Rouland, Fred Alban, Jean and Gilbert Colombo, Roger Renaud (also known as Rio Jeno), Jean Bonal, etc. ; then, in the 1970s, André Hodeir, Jacky and Henri Giordano, Roger Bourdin, Pierre Dutour, Stéphane Grappelli, André Ceccarelli, Marc Chantereau, Bernard Larquet and many others. The catalogue grew rapidly, offering jazz, world music, disco, rock, etc.

Only Técipress – whose music publishing operation became In Editions in 1972 and which now belongs to Kapagama music publishers – was authorised to distribute the company's titles'. These were available on professional magnetic tapes, with only a few exceptions:

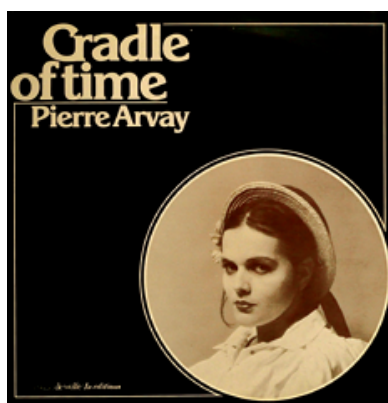
- > when, to facilitate the promotion and distribution of certain music on the radio and television, Técipress-In Editions produced them on records, especially under the name Sonomag
- > a partnership with the stock music British label Chappell Music, which produced a few records in 1974 with Técipress-In Editions music

- > the 33 RPM *Timing*, collection of sixteen records which came out between 1975 and 1977, initiated by Jacky Giordano who took care of the first six albums; the ten others were developed by Pierre Arvay and nearly all published in partnership with Music De Wolfe. *Timing* presented various Técipress-In Editions composers and a range of available music
- > some other records not belonging to the collection *Timing*, which were published with Music De Wolfe in 1976.

In 1964 the tide turned for Teppaz records: despite the extensive catalogue (modern and classical music, world music, popular music, classical guitar, etc.) and the hundreds of records which had been produced over six years, the label was not fulfilling expectations. The brand, known throughout the world for its portable record players, was not thought of as being in the musical sector, led at that time by giants such as Philips, Pathé, Columbia, or Barclay...

Moreover, some of these companies, which also made record players and other electrical equipment, had been overtaken by the success of the little Teppaz record player. They therefore did not want the firm to also take over in the record market. Their attacks – and some pressure on record retailers – rapidly took effect and Marcel Teppaz decided not to fight them in this area. This experience served in any case as a springboard for Pierre Arvay, bringing him the fame and recognition he had hoped for in the world of the arts.

TWO RECORDS FROM THE COLLECTION *TIMING* AND A SONOMAG RECORD.

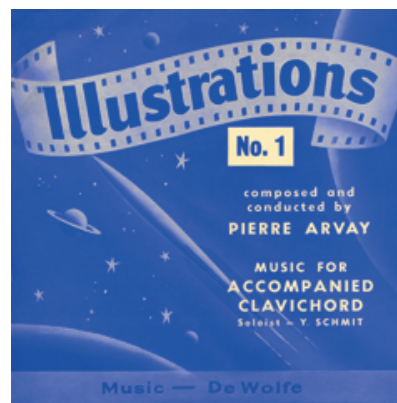


Pierre Arvay then joined Music De Wolfe with whom he had already been working for two years. This company, which also owned the Hudson Music and Sylvester Music labels, became his second principal publisher, after Técipress-In Editions.

A record collection, *Illustrations*, was created for him. It came out in ten parts over the years, on the fringe of his other albums alternating the musical genres: rhapsodic structures, music for solo instruments, full orchestrations, theme music for percussion, sonatas for piano, “musique concrète”, etc.

Apart from these new creations, sometimes written under the pseudonym of Cham Staker, Music De Wolfe reissued all the titles composed for Teppaz, thus enabling them to be widely distributed abroad.

MUSIC DE WOLFE RECORDS.



In 1967, Lola and Pierre Arvay had a holiday house built at Bagnols-en-Forêt in the Var area (at a place called Les Escolles). Very soon they were dividing their life between this property in the south of France, a pied à terre in Paris and their main house in Brunoy – which they left in 1974 to move to the capital (Rue Saint Claude, Paris III).

Although Pierre Arvay had been composing original soundtracks for the cinema or television throughout his life, the end of the 1960s was marked by three television series:

- > *Les Sept de l'escalier* 15, 25 episodes broadcast from 3 January 1967
- > *Aglaé et Sidonie* (cartoon), 65 episodes over five seasons, broadcast from 27 February 1969. Each episode included a song, as well as accompanying music and music for the opening and closing credits. This was a family experience as his wife and two daughters did the voiceovers for the heroines
- > *Nanou*, 13 episodes broadcast from 8 September 1970.



3 RECORDS OF THE CARTOON
AGLAÉ ET SIDONIE.

From 1969 to 1973, invited by Pierre-Aimé Touchard, director of the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique in Paris, Pierre Arvay took up the post of teacher of rhythm in that institution. These classes, created in order to complete the training of future actors, were devoted to learning rhythm and the positioning of the voice, with Pierre Arvay leading exercises from the piano.

The rest of the decade was devoted to the Music De Wolfe albums and compositions for the Técipress-In Editions label which Pierre Arvay continued to develop, especially with the record collection *Timing* mentioned above.

At the age of 55, as he was working on a large musical project requiring two conductors working together, Pierre Arvay died suddenly, on 18 August 1980, in his house in Bagnols-en-Forêt. He is buried in the cemetery of this village in the south of France.

Apart from his early work as a songwriter or composer and orchestrator/arranger for Le Chant du Monde and Teppaz, Pierre Arvay's name was little known to the general public, as composers were rarely mentioned in the field of library music. However, he left a catalogue of more than 1,500 compositions, the majority strictly intended for this professional use, as well as numerous records. His "sound footprint" goes with us today as it did yesterday; it is part of our daily environment whether at the cinema, on the radio, television, Internet or in many different public places.



PIERRE AND LOLA ARVAY
WITH THEIR TWO DAUGHTERS:
CATHERINE, WITH HER SON
ADRIEN, AND DANIELLE
(IN THEIR HOUSE
AT BAGNOLS-EN-FORÊT,
SUMMER 1980).

Great soloists have performed on the recordings of his music: Lily Laskine (harp), Françoise Le Gonidec (classical piano), Maurice Allard (bassoon), Georges Arvanitas and Maurice Vander (jazz piano/electronic organ), Jeanne Loriod and Nelly Caron (ondes Martenot), Georges Barboteu (horn), Barthélémy Rosso (guitar), André Ceccarelli (drums), Roger Bourdin (flute), Jean-Charles Capon (cello), Jean Buzon (trumpet and bugle), Benny Vasseur (trombone) and others.

From the great classical forms to minimalist experimental compositions, from music for dancing to film soundtracks, from “musique concrète” to themes inspired by religion, Pierre Arvay had two careers: one as a classical contemporary music composer and one dedicated to the more popular musical forms, allowing him to express the countless entrancing melodies that only he knew how to write.

So “serious” music alongside its more “commercial” rival... So often set in opposition, it was not easy to reconcile them.

However it is this complementarity which gives the work of Pierre Arvay all its colour, its status as a huge chapter in French music, which enables it still to be distributed across the world.



PHOTOGRAPHS AND DOCUMENTS

Personal collection of the Arvay family and of Adrien Thomas; all rights for the visuals are reserved

Photo of Pierre Arvay at his desk (Bagnols en Forêt, approximately 1973): Liliane Sauvan-Magnet

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GRAPHICS

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AND ALSO...

For more information and to listen to the music: www.pierrearvay.fr