

An Image of the Exotic in the Works of Ernest Reyer: from *Le Sélam* to *Salammbô*

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Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to present the outstanding figure of the French composer Ernest Reyer. Despite the fact that his works did not receive proper attention, nonetheless his contribution to the evolution of 19th century French music is important. An ardent admirer of Hector Berlioz and Richard Wagner, the music of Reyer distinguishes itself due to the sincerity with which the composer strives to musically represent the true meaning behind words, ideas, emotions. Although unjustly criticized for imitating Félicien David's "Le Désert" in his symphony "Le Sélam", the oriental colouring of Reyer's works was influenced by his prolonged sojourn in Algeria, where his spirit could immerse in the subtle and exotic atmosphere of the Orient. Composer and music critic, through his compositions as well as through his written works Reyer strived to elevate art and raise the quality of the musical compositions of his time, especially those belonging to the genre of opera. Even though he had to wait for his talent to be acknowledged, Reyer was forbearing and chose not to make any compromises with respect to his musical works, staying true to his high and noble ideals. The evolution of the composer from "Le Sélam" to his last opera "Salammbô" is presented, with the purpose of unveiling a vivid portrait of Reyer.*

Keywords: *Reyer, exotic, colour, oriental, truthfulness*

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